The AMERICAN REVIEW
VOLUME SEVEN NUMBER THREE
SUMMER 1936

The Shape of Things and Men

Two Views of the World State

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THE newspaper says that H. G. Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come*[*] has been made into a motion picture and will shortly appear in our city. How should we greet this evidence of the shape of things as they are? With a sigh of resignation? Or with a hiss of discontent? American audiences are too well "conditioned" to hiss, and besides, what good does it do to hiss a shadow on a screen? Shall we then take refuge in the philosophical reflection that it was foreordained, as a part of the vulgar harmony of things modern, that Mr. Wells's Utopianism should at last abandon its pretensions to being literature or science and finds its appropriate medium in the movies. This time, we shall not have to shed tears over the vulgarization of a masterpiece.

Yet there is something ominous about this thing. The generation that calls itself modern can hardly remember a time when Mr. Wells was not offering some vision of the future. We used to call his stories "fantasies" or "scientific romances" and gave them the respect we would give to any bit of highly colored fiction. Even if the stories came true in part, as some of Jules Verne and Edward Bellamy was coming true, we were not greatly bothered, we might even be pleased, for life might thereby become in one stroke both more exciting and more convenient. But I think we are far off from that mood nowadays. Science and invention have moved noticeably in the direction that Mr. Wells's insistent wand has traced, and the world looks more like a Wells landscape than it did before 1914. But if it is exciting, it is not at all pleasantly exciting. For the masses, the old naïve wonder at the prodigies of science has dwindled to a dull, passive expectation that anything can happen, and that, since it can, it probably will. Mr. Wells's talking picture will doubtless seem plausible enough to the readers of *Time* and the Hearst Sunday supplement. If we have had a Lindbergh, why not a Buck Rogers? If we have airplanes, why not interplanetary rockets? If we have national states, gigantically but not completely industrialized, why not a World State to make the whole thing perfectly efficient and splendid? *Why not?* is about the only kind of *why* that people can get into their heads nowadays. If we are going to be stubborn dissenters and ask *why* rather than *why not*, it is time to look to our weapons and decide how to deal with this formidable historian whose history is always prognostication. For however much the Wellsian prognostications may be disclaimed by the professionals as being non-professional and irregular, they are a part of the wish-thinking of the social scientists and even of some physical scientists in our time, and must therefore be dealt with seriously.

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[*] *The Shape of Things to Come* by H. G. Wells (Macmillan, 1934).

As to the book itself (for I have not seen the picture) it purports to be the "dream book" of one Philip Raven, an aged diplomatist of the secretariat of the League of Nations – a manuscript left, by an odd chance, in the hands of Mr. H. G. Wells as editor. It is a "history", though a highly selective one, of events transpiring between 1929 and 2106. To give this prognosticating history a measure of prestige, Mr. Wells notes that in the Raven MSS. he finds predictions of the death of Ivar Kreuger, of the Lindbergh kidnapping, and of the Hitler régime – events which occurred *after* Raven's supposed death. As editor he solemnly confesses that he has been tempted to regard the book as the "imaginative outlet" of an intensely practical person; but it might also be "a conditional prophecy in the Hebrew manner produced in a quasi-inspired mood".

The first fourth of the book is actual history, of a sort, ranging up to the 1930's. It is remarkably like a cross between *The Outline of History* and a Wells Sunday article on the European situation.

From 1930 on, the actual history merges imperceptibly into the putative history. After the First World War of 1914, we are told, come political combinations which end in a series of still greater world wars. The earth is devastated, humanity is wiped out or left in impotent, disordered survival, bandits and robbers take possession, and civilization is gone.

But it is not quite gone. It returns with the restoration of a transport system by the Air Men, who presently take into their hands the task of bringing about order – or rather, a new order. They set up a World Council and make a "Lifetime Plan" for world reconstruction. The scheme of course requires the suppression of foolish dissenters, but the Air Men contrive to avoid the bloody purges and liquidations of previous centuries. They make use of a gas, prettily named "pacificin", which renders stubborn people (Roman Catholics, for instance) harmlessly inert. What results, after all mistakes have been rectified and all rebellion quashed, is a regular World State on the Wellsian plan, a Utopia ruled by a selfless, quite scientific aristocracy, who have absolute control of world affairs.

In his capacity as editor, Mr. Wells adds the following comment:

> If this is neither a dream book nor a Sibylline history, then it is a theory of world-revolution. Plainly the thesis is that history must now continue to be a string of accidents with an increasingly disastrous trend, until a comprehensive faith in the modernized World-State, socialistic, cosmopolitan, and creative, takes hold of the human imagination. When the existing governments and ruling theories of life, the decaying religions and the decaying political forms of today, have sufficiently lost prestige through failure and catastrophe, then and then only will world-wide reconstruction be possible. And it must needs be the work, first of all, of an aggressive order of religiously devoted men and women who will try out and establish and impose a new pattern of living upon the race.

The emphasis is on the word *impose*. Clearly, if enough people do not agree to believe in Mr. Wells's outline of the future, then those who do believe must impose it, if necessary by force, upon the unbelievers. For the coming race will have to understand (he makes his historian say elsewhere) "that there can be only one right way of looking at the world for a normal human being and only one conception of a proper scheme of social reactions, and that all others must be wrong and misleading".

Such statements indicate the danger of growing old without ever growing up. Mr. Wells, once a happy forward-looker, has become dogmatic and grim in his old age. He talks like an angry sociologist . . . or a baffled poet. He talks, in fact, somewhat like a Shelley whose Golden Age simply will not happen according to his wish.

It is at this point that the fundamental weakness of Mr. Wells's vision is revealed. He is not, after all, a voice of the future. He is the voice of the past, indeed, of a particular past of fairly recent date which may well appear, in time to come, to be one of the most crude and naïve chapters in human history. His way of pretending to look bravely and nobly into the future is a trick for interpreting the past to suit the kind of scheming by which he hopes to modify the present. He is that most inferior kind of romanticist — a man who is retrospective without knowing it.

For while announcing his devotion to science, Mr. Wells does not dare to argue that a horoscope itself can be scientific, nor does he call his work science. He invokes, instead, an old magic and an old art. That is, he combines fiction and history, mixing them carefully, so that the innocent reader will hardly know where history leaves off and fiction begins. What he wants to do is to borrow the prestige of history, whose view is ever retrospective, for his fiction, the social purpose of which looks toward the future. And why does he use fiction? I think because Mr. Wells knows that fiction persuades where logic fails, since the human mind, though modern enough in some ways, has its old contrary habit of accepting the untrue truths of art and rejecting the true truths of science. This is an odd situation in which to find an advocate of a scientifically controlled world-order.

But why does history have so much prestige for Mr. Wells that he invokes it as almost a kind of magic? Here we begin to "date" a man who would like to be considered timeless. Mr. Wells is a child of a great retrospective movement — nineteenth-century Romanticism. And nineteenth-century Romanticism is only the last phase of a still greater retrospective movement which has encompassed it — the Renaissance. Mr. Wells illustrates the old paradox of the revival of learning. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, men — especially Englishmen — began to look back at the very moment when they were in process of laying their hands on the new instrument, science, which would give them an unaccustomed and disturbing way of looking forward. There has been a long interplay of romantic retrospection and scientific forward-looking. During a great part of the period men have felt compelled to look back in order to discover means of rescuing society from the disorder into which it has been thrown by science, pure and applied. I suppose that no other period in human history can rival the Renaissance for the sharpening of historical self-consciousness. No other time has been so determined to compile and interpret historical facts, and yet this has happened during a time when science has seemed to make discoveries that destroy the virtue of historical study. A curious passage in *The Shape of Things to Come* bears witness to the pathetic division of Mr. Wells's mind between retrospect and prospect:

> There was no such thing as a Center of Knowledge in the world [his "historian" is speaking of the old bad days before the World State took charge]. It is remarkable to note how long mankind was able to carry on without any knowledge organization whatever. . . . To the people of the Age of Frustration our interlocking research, digest, discussion, verification, notification, and informative organizations, our Fundamental Knowledge System, that is, with its special stations everywhere, its regional bureaus, its central city at Barcelona, its seventeen million active workers, and its five million correspondents and reserve enquirers, would have seemed incredibly vast.

In other words, progress for Wells means a glorified and enormous British Museum, properly "socialized", which will bind the twenty-first century to the same kind of systematic retrospect that men of his Victorian childhood invented and developed. The poor man cannot conceive of a fact as simply *being* in the living harmony of things and men. For him it is not a fact at all until it has been "retrospected" (a word should be coined for this!) – that is, until it has been preserved in the formaldehyde pickle of a card index and has thus been made into a specimen. In the Wellsian future no moment will have a meaning until it has been seized, recorded, and tabulated. Mr. Wells's mental habit is like that of our newspaper editors, who are continually publishing little columns to remind us of what happened yesterday a year ago, or five years ago, or twenty-five years ago.

Next, there is Mr. Wells's frightened concern over the imminent collapse of civilization and his somewhat Spenglerian view of the decline and fall of nations. This phobia has been troubling Mr. Wells for a long time. In its original form it was harmless enough, for he imagined only catastrophes beyond human control, like the meeting of a comet with the earth, or a visitation from the hostile Martians. But in the later stage he fears catastrophes of human origin, such as tremendous wars, or the failure of socialism, or, if I interpret him correctly, a religious revival. This notion of inevitable decadence and collapse is of course merely another phase of the sharpened historical consciousness which is both romantic and modern. When did it start? Perhaps renewed acquaintance in modern times with the works of Thucydides and Tacitus, the historians of decline, had a little to do with it. Gibbon, surely, is the chief modern progenitor of the idea. The popularity of his *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in the early nineteenth century forced pessimistic analogies into the heads of a war-weary generation of poets and thinkers. Standing amid the ruins of Rome, Byron saw the history of the Mediterranean civilizations as a series of cycles that always followed the same course:

> *First freedom, and then glory, when that fails,*
> *Wealth, vice, corruption, barbarism at last.*

And Shelley, meditating upon the Platonic cycle of history, shuddered before the awful prospect of new wars and decadence that would inevitably succeed the return of the Golden Age. Between such romantics and Mr. Wells there is not very much difference, when it is a matter of the rise and fall of nations.

Mr. Wells, however, has had the benefit of Victorian optimism, and he therefore has grafted the theory of inevitable human progress on to the older obsession with the cyclical theory of an inevitable rise and fall. He looks back (again without really knowing what he does) to the good nineteenth-century days when science for a time seemed ready to become the centralizing, determining authority which would replace the old political and religious authorities. The dream of the Great Society which runs through all of Mr. Wells's books has its foundation upon the Victorian idea of science as man's Promethean deliverer from all of the old discords and tyrannies. For Mr. Wells, Progress is the dogmatic certainty that is sufficient to motivate all human actions, and Technology is the instrument by which Progress is to be made effective. Progress is his God, and Technology is his Messiah. With respect to these he is pure fundamentalist, as yet untouched by the skepticism and agnosticism that have drawn many younger intellects away from science.

The novelty of Mr. Wells's ideas is therefore only superficial. His terminology is current, that is all. As a strategist he resembles the Brass Hats of the World War, who gave orders for the manipulation of gas, tanks, and machine-guns, but all the time *thought* in terms of Napoleonic mass assault. The principles in which Mr. Wells believes have repeatedly failed in the course of the past century to secure anything like human solidarity even within the limited area of Europe. What makes him think that they will avail to secure human solidarity in the world area? There is something childish and fretful about his view of the World State. We suspect him of wanting to Anglicize the universe, with a devoted band of Buck Rogerses, clad in space suits and armed with "pacificin". This vision is a little cheap.

But his greatest mistake is in confusing *must-be* with *ought-to-be*. He is a Necessitarian, who goes far beyond the common variety of modest economic determinists. His Utopia is not an ideal, it is only a by-product of circumstance. His mask of bouncing cheerfulness hardly conceals the man's quivering pessimism. He is not even a good fatalist, but a blustering coward before man and nature, who fears every faculty of man except his capacity for rational knowledge, and who distrusts every aspect of nature that cannot be ticketed in the laboratory.

With such a constitution, he naturally omits to consider even so modest a fact as simple human desire. For that reason, if for no other, we are obliged to date Mr. Wells as belonging more to the nineteenth century than to the twentieth, or possibly the twenty-first. Even the economic determinists are beginning to admit that, upon occasion, men may choose what economics they may be determined by. Other men are pointing out that now, as often in the past, groups and nations have made non-economic, or "unnecessary", choices. A view is emerging which resembles the opinion offered many years ago, by Van Wyck Brooks, in his critical study, *The World of H. G. Wells*. It is possible to argue, said Brooks, that the "intellectualist" or Wellsian view is too easy and too glib. Let him only be compared with the artists, who, since they look at all human motives, give a more complete interpretation, and the shallowness of Mr. Wells's views is readily evident. Artists, wrote Brooks, are likely "to throw into relief the deep, obscure conviction of the 'plain man' – commonly the good man – that to endeavor to make life conform with ideas is in some way to deprive the world of just those elements which create character and to strike at an ideal forged through immemorial suffering and effort". Furthermore, Brooks continues –

> Merely to dismiss as dumb folly an all but universal contention of this kind . . . is to beg the whole question of intellectualism itself. For, if it could be conclusively shown that any view of life not incidentally but by its nature emasculated life and destroyed the roots of character, then of course, no matter how rationally self-evident it might be, and how much confusion and suffering it might avert, it would never even justify its own reason for being – it would never *succeed*, the best part of human nature would oppose it to the end of time and the intelligence itself would be discredited.

But Mr. Wells does not inquire about "the best part of human nature" or indeed understand any part of it that does not suit his purposes. If he does not understand what is in another man's head, he is simply moved to knock that man on the head, with the barbaric petulance that he likes to attribute to Tennessee Fundamentalists and Irish Catholics. In *The Shape of Things to Come*, all such dissenters, high and low, are triumphantly liquidated. They have the "Opposition Spirit". And they are located in "the still half barbaric peasant populations of Haiti, Ireland, West and Central Africa, American Georgia, and its associated states, Georgia in the Caucasus". Perhaps the curious juxtapositions found in this list are intended to illustrate the kind of humor we are to expect in the World State. But they seem, to a dissenting American, like the sneer of a petulant old man, who is also a snobbish Briton, at those parts of humanity that are different and hence (this is primitive logic) hostile. It is some comfort to know, however, that the existence of such portions of humanity, characterized by a stout "Opposition Spirit", constitutes by Mr. Wells's own admission a formidable obstacle to the establishment of the Wellsian Utopia.

Yet if Mr. Wells is to be fully answered, he must be opposed by people who go beyond Van Wyck Brooks and ask not only of the artist but also of the statesman and economist that they base their systems upon the heterogeneity of human desires and add an ethical Ought to the pragmatic Must. The final test of any Utopia, as of the forms of Utopianism that appear in economic systems, governments, and religions, lies in whether it provides a way of life for humanity that is actually a human way. It must call out other faculties than skill or intellect alone. Why should the human species survive, if it cannot survive nobly? The Wellsian salvation is only another form of destruction, for his Utopia rests upon technology and power at the expense of all else. His vision seems petty in comparison with the visions of Plato, More, Dante, or Bacon. But for a contrasting vision, which is in itself the most powerful criticism that could be offered of the Wellsian Utopia, I turn to a more contemporary item. It might be taken as an answer to the question: Would humanity accept Mr. Wells's World State if it should be set up? It proceeds from a great Irishman, one of those catalogued by Mr. Wells as among the irredeemable Opposition.

In 1923 the late George William Russell ("AE") published *The Interpreters*,* a prose work which examines critically the identical world situation anticipated in *The Shape of Things to Come*. My impression is that the book is little known. It has been allowed to go out of print in this country.

In *The Interpreters* the World State (Russell calls it an Empire) already exists – a Wellsian World State in outline, with its power resting on control of the air, and its government in the hands of a scientific aristocracy. But a revolt has flared up, in a nation that very closely resembles Ireland, and the book begins at the moment of revolt. We see the poet Lavelle hastening through a city where an explosion has already given warning that the outbreak has begun and where the crowding citizens only await a further signal to show their colors and take part in the fighting. People are rising against "the iron law of an iron age". "After centuries of frustrated effort the nation, long dominated by an alien power which seemed immutable, had a resurrection." The resurrection has led to a formidable uprising. The air fleets are arriving to crush it if they can. Fighting is in progress to gain strategic points in the city. In the hurlyburly the poet is seized, with other leaders who are his companions in arms. All are thrust into an upper room to await almost certain execution at dawn. Since it is no time for sleeping and they are for the moment impotent to help their friends outside, they spend the night in a discussion of the motives that brought them to their action. What follows is a Platonic symposium dealing with two major questions: first, what are the causes which lead men to rebel against a scientific society, and, second, "how shall right find its appropriate might?" – or, what principle of revolution will prevent high-minded revolutionists from becoming, in their turn, brutal oppressors?

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* *The Interpreters* by AE (Macmillan, 1923).

The persons of the symposium may be taken, as Russell says in his introduction, as "scattered portions of one nature dramatically sundered as the soul is in dream". They are the parts of human nature which Mr. Wells would like to forget or to destroy.

The poet Lavelle is ruled by the earth-spirit. Like a true Celtic mystic, he believes in intuitive communion with nature and the gods of nature. He is a nationalist, or perhaps a regionalist, who holds that the earth-spirit makes for diversity of life. Every race has its own culture, and the races or nations follow "archetypal images". It is tyranny, or indeed sacrilege, to violate the resulting unity, or "orchestration of race", by imposition from without.

Leroy, a writer, stands for democracy, or even for an individualism which amounts, in its ideal extreme, to anarchy.

For Culain, a socialist leader, the rebellion is a revolt of humanity. He is not in the struggle "merely to exchange world masters for nation masters". But he is by no means a Marxian socialist. He is nearer to being a Christian, for he would transform the world by love.

Rian, an architect, allies himself with one point of view or the other, according as it seems momentarily to promise a healthy and natural form of art. He opposes the World State because the state "does not create beauty".

Brehon, the historian, is the unconscious, yet probably the remote, cause of the rise of the national spirit to revolutionary action. Years before, he devoted his whole life to writing a history of his country, which, when published, had a profound effect. "He had unveiled so extraordinary a past, so rich a literature in a language almost forgotten, that his work became an object of passionate study by his countrymen, and what had been intended almost as a funeral oration or panegyric over a dead nation had the effect of rekindling it." But for years he has been in retirement, and nobody knows what his recent thought has been.

Lavelle the poet, Leroy the individualist, Culain the socialist, and Rian the artist are the true revolutionary types. Brehon the historian acts as moderator in the symposium and at the end offers the view that synthesizes all views. To balance the discussion, a sixth character is introduced – Heyt, "the autocrat of one of those great economic federations which dominated state policy and whose operations had created deep bitterness among the revolting people". He has been taken prisoner by mistake, and is certain to be released as soon as he is identified. But during the night he is given full opportunity to defend the World State.

The discussion that follows the introduction of these figures is one of the finest pieces of dialectic written in modern times. I do not know how the rich complexities of human nature could be better set forth. Mr. Wells finds one motive and one only for adherence to the World State – the need for human solidarity; and only one human capacity to be used as an instrument in establishing this solidarity – man's power to exploit and manipulate nature. But Russell discovers several dominating motives which must be reconciled with one another if a World State is to come about. The difference between Russell and Wells is the difference between wisdom and technology. One cannot help reflecting that the Wellsian World State forces us to the regrettable dilemma of choosing between the two, in favor of an austere and dictatorial technology; but Russell seems to tell us that technology can be retained if wisdom rules.

As the symposium progresses, with the several minds keyed by the moment to the noblest expression of which each is capable, the argument of each in turn seems unanswerable, until it is answered by some different view of equal nobility and fervor.

Lavelle the poet argues for the integrity of national cultures. "How", he says, "could national genius create a civilization if an alien power controls the economic and cultural activities of the people, if it substitutes in youth a mongrel culture for the national culture?" The national culture is not necessarily superior to the alien culture because the latter is alien. But "natural aptitudes are not interchangeable. . . . We can draw inspiration from other races, but their culture can never be a substitute for our own. . . . If all wisdom was acquired from without it might be politic to make our culture cosmopolitan.

But I believe our best wisdom does not come from without, but arises in the soul and is an emanation from the earth-spirit, a voice speaking directly to us as dwellers in the land."

Lavelle goes on to condemn "rootless" cultures and to explain what he means by "mongrel cultures". "In countries where they have lost the primaeval consciousness of unity with the earth-spirit they either have no mythology and cosmogony and thought is materialistic, or else they go to the Greek or Jew for spiritual culture. So distant lands are made sacred, but not the air they breathe; not the earth under foot. A culture so created has rarely deep roots, for it is derivative."

To Heyt, the advocate of the World State, such ideas are juvenile, romantic, backward. He is a realist and believes in power. "The might of an organism is the measure of its rightness. . . . The upholding of a regional ideal is like the display of a ruined house." The weakness of the regional ideal is enough to condemn it for him. Power is where it belongs, in the hands of the World State, which is ruled by pragmatic minds that can organize control. In the new element, the air, which is now the governing element, no frontiers can exist. And the sanction for this power is science, which reveals the unity of nature but condones no weakness. "Science," he argues, "now sits in the seat of Caesar."

Leroy the individualist, or philosophical anarchist, stands apart from both these views, though he is much nearer to Lavelle than to Heyt. He admits that a World State ruled by science is a possible achievement, but it is bound to be a dehumanizing one. It will turn complete persons into "fractional elements". "The more scientifically efficient is the organism you create," he says to Heyt, "the more does it dominate the units and make them in its own image. . . . Though there be one thousand millions in your world state, does it in its totality equal one Shakespeare?"

Yet, thus prizing the sanctity of the individual life, he must go on to differentiate himself from his fellow-rebel, Lavelle. He has stood with Lavelle in the fight for national freedom, but when that fight is won he would go on to fight "for the freedom of the local community and for the greater richness and variety in life", presumably to the point of rebelling against the nation when the nation takes the role of oppressor. Like Jefferson he has sworn eternal hostility to every form of tyranny over the human mind. His irrepressible quest for freedom is a kind of perpetual dissidence of dissent which must go on setting man against society, wherever society denies the sanctity of the individual.

For Culain the socialist the World State will be overcome neither by nationalism nor by individualism, but "by pity". Born in a city tenement, he early acquired the kind of humanism that is humanitarian. "My first thought beyond myself came," he says, "because of an old woman who wept a quarter of an hour before she died, being unable to rise and give help to another." For him, "the life which forgets itself turns to its true immortality". His vision, unlike that of Lavelle who has dreamed of the earth-spirit, has been of souls "brighter as they turned from themselves", and darker "as they clutched at the personal". He is communist and socialist (in the Platonic, ideal sense, not in the Marxian sense) because he believes "humanity to be a single being in spite of its myriad forms, faces, and eyes". "Whatever makes us clutch at the personal, whatever strengthens the illusion of separateness, whether it be the possession of wealth, or power over the weak, or fear of the strong, all delay the awakening from this pitiful dream of life by fostering a false egoism."

Heyt denounces this view; it would result in a "spineless society". The poet Lavelle is at first inclined to sympathize with Culain, but is checked by Leroy. "You have vision," Leroy says to the socialist, "but you cannot give your vision to those who will build up your communist state. Your organization will be to them an opaque idea, an end in itself, not an avenue to the soul. . . . It will force on humanity an iron brotherhood, and that would be the deepest of human hells! You offer your candle of vision to the blind. But what use can it be to the blind except as a bludgeon?"

In such terms the parley continues through the hours of night. The noise of battle in the air and on the streets draws them now and then to the windows, and the occasion, as well as the logic of their own minds, brings them to the question of force. Should men be completely non-violent, using only the methods of passive resistance that Culain advocates; or should they take the view of Lavelle, and to some extent of Leroy, that the philosophical onlooker is inevitably vanquished and negated by the crude materialist – that "ideals for which men are not ready to die soon perish"? At last, with all views stated, but not yet reconciled, they turn to Brehon the historian, who has so far taken but little part in the discussion.

"I do not advocate philosophical indifference," he says, "for I believe we can be fighters in the spirit and use immortal powers. . . . I believe spiritual ideals, except for those who can maintain them through all conflict, are lost if we defend them by material means. There are other ways by which right can find its appropriate might."

Brehon then explains that every conflict has left a wave of materialism behind it. Love and hate are both great transforming powers. But by hate "nations create in themselves the character they imagine in their enemies. Hence . . . all passionate conflict results in an interchange of characteristics."

But how may spiritual powers, unaided by material weapons, ever win victories? they ask.

Then Brehon reveals – and this must have been the heart of the matter for Russell, the theosophist and mystic – that he is one of a small company of men scattered through the world, who by long self-discipline have learned the ancient wisdom of how "feeling and imagination radiate their influence to the boundaries of the world soul as stars shed their light through space". With the Christs and Buddhas the deed is done when the thought is born, and by "single gentleness" they do more than armies. To the architect Rian's objection that men do not dwell in imaginary houses, Brehon answers that the physical or outer powers are enriched and not impoverished by the exercise of spiritual force.

And for any who may fear, with Lavelle the poet, that all human distinctions vanish, under the operation of this "spiritual force", in a haze of transcendentalism, he has a general answer, a theory of what humanity is like.

Whatever we think, says Brehon, we think in terms of matter, energy, and spirit, and there is nothing beyond these except the mystic unity of Deity. "All that is substance in us aspires to the ancestral beauty" – that is the category of matter, or earth, in which the poet moves. "All that is power in us desires to become invincible" – that is the category of Heyt, the man of the World State. "All that is consciousness longs for fullness of being" – that is the category of Culain the socialist, which in a lesser sense is spiritual. And what of Leroy's anarchic ideas? The answer is that we can imagine natures "so balanced that they may be said to be more complete symbols of the Self-existent or Solitary of the Heavens in whom all qualities inhere". Such men tend to be self-sufficing. "They exist in increasing numbers, and their philosophy, from being the most despised of political theories, has in three hundred years become one of the most powerful." The notion of the right of the individual represents, apparently, a higher stage of humanity than the herd instinct. "The creation of great individuals is the intent of Nature. . . . The external law imposed by the greatest of states must finally give way before the instinct for self-rule which alone is consonant with the dignity and divinity of man." But he adds: "Though these are travelling on the true path I do not think they will attain their full stature until they comprehend the spiritual foundations on which other political theories rest, and can build on them as do the devotees of beauty or love or power."

Here then is the "true path". But if the individualist neglects "spiritual powers", he will never tread it with consistent success. All men must guard against a partial exercise of their humanity.

> Those who seek for beauty will never master its magic unless they also have power, and those who seek for power will find that the mighty surrenders itself fully only to that which is most gentle; and we shall be repulsed perpetually until we have made perfect in ourselves those elements out of which both we and the universe are fashioned. . . . Therefore we ought to regard none who differ from us as enemies but to contemplate them rather with yearning, as those who possess some power or vision from which we are shut out but which we ought to share.

The book ends with a poem which Lavelle has been moved by the excitement of the moment to compose. As the dawn comes, the noise of conflict draws nearer to the building where they are imprisoned. The World State is losing. Its defenders must evacuate. But the prisoners cannot be taken along. They must die when the building is blown up. Heyt is identified and allowed to pass out to the army of his own people. Lavelle is on the point of intervening to save Brehon also, for he is guiltless of overt revolutionary action. But the old historian stops him. It is Brehon's choice to remain till death with those who have been brought to rebellion partly through his studies, and who in the last moments of life have received from him something like the wisdom of Socrates.

Whether or not we accept individualism, amounting in its ideal state to anarchy, as the "true path" for humanity, it is clear that Russell's criticism of a technological World State, based on power, is fundamental, and, so far as I can tell, it is irrefutable. A technological World State like that represented by the views of Heyt or Wells can be set up only by the abstraction of one human quality at the expense of all others. If so set up, this state will contain the seed of its ruin, which might prove to be more catastrophic than even Mr. Wells has imagined, if, to use Russell's phrase, it should beget an injustice so monstrous that it would be "shaken off the back of nature", as once Atlantis was shaken.

Whatever we may think of Russell's unelaborated notion concerning spiritual powers, his central idea is pertinent and all-important to those who are attempting in one way or another to remake our confused social order. No World State is desirable, no national state, no form of civilization, or order of society, unless it can reconcile and accommodate the different human qualities which are symbolized in Lavelle, Culain, and Heyt, and which are united, though in bitter incompleteness and frustration, in Leroy. Only on such terms can we have a human society – if all we have known of humanity at its best and can conceive when we think in human terms is a reality worth preserving. Here is the only possible answer to Byron's question: "Can tyrants but by tyrants conquered be?" It is of course not a new answer but an old one. It is the very answer made by the founders of the American republic, so far as some of them, wise men like Russell, contemplated an order of society and not merely a political instrument. But our wavering concern, now with morals or humanitarianism, now with politics, and now with economics or with science as a kind of power, has obscured the original intention from our view. If, as Mr. Herbert Agar has said, we in America are entering another Great Debate, like that which preceded the American Revolution and the Civil War, a debate which will deal with fundamentals rather than with sham issues and matters of expediency, then it is a comfort to remember that one great mind, recently alive in the Western world, could foresee the issues and give them a noble shape, a human shape. In Wells, the old goal of technological specialization becomes a club of fear with which to beat the unruly into subjection. But in Russell there is the voice of a wisdom that we might have thought departed from the earth.

George Herbert

AUSTIN WARREN

ONE need not have read Ruskin's set piece – his antithetic descriptions of St. Mark's at Venice, magnificent in its marbles and gold, yet fronted by a *piazza* swarming with children and beggars, and the English cathedral, neat, trim, surrounded by closely clipped lawns perambulated by starched nursemaids – to feel the difference between the two worlds. Chartres, Notre Dame at Paris, St. Peter's at Rome: all are showplaces freely open to tourists, who wander about in aimless amazement or pedantic boredom or dissenting incomprehension or aesthetic reverie; but, at altars circumscribing the fane, masses go on all morning; before shrines, prefaced by votive candles, the pious pray, insensitive to Anglo-Saxon curiosity. Still houses of God, not relics of some former and alien age, Continental churches rarely renounce the currently pious but aesthetically objectionable: wax or paper flowers, or cheap lace frontals; crutches, or limbs in wax effigy, deposited by men grateful to therapeutic saints; at Chartres, a baroque marble reredos half blotting out windows which readers of Henry Adams have traveled to see, and jarring to sensibility not so literate.

In contrast, the English cathedral, almost universally, seems a museum piece, cherished and kept in faithful repair by impulses respectful, filial, antiquarian, British – but scarcely pious. Where, before the Reformation, altars once stood, the wall boasts, as everywhere, its spotless whitewash; but, neatly attached to the wall, a decanal placard supplies accurate historical information. From the incursions of schoolboys and tourists there is decently withdrawn, for "prayer and meditation", one chapel – where a pious lady or two may, without embarrassment, utter her petitions. All is neat and orderly; the restorations have been executed, under the supervision of that learned historian, the Dean, by the best modern experts. All bespeaks the Church as by law established: can these legally dry bones live?

From the cathedrals and the city temples of Wren one must turn to the village churches, more appropriately reached by cycle than by motor. The two holiest places known to me in England are both so small as to hold scarcely fifty worshipers; both owe their repute and their quality to saints of the Anglican Golden Age – the seventeenth century. At Little Gidding, in Huntingdonshire, Nicholas Ferrar established, with a membership recruited solely from his own kinsfolk, his "Protestant Nunnery", a retreat visited by the Cantabrigian poet, Crashaw, by his sacred majesty, Charles the Martyr, and by many fameless friends to the devout life. At Bemerton, a mile from Salisbury, Ferrar's friend, George Herbert, passed his final three years.

The "almost incredible story" of his rectorate has found idyllic chronicle in the pages of Izaak Walton. In an age of clerical laxity, Herbert, accompanied by his household, read matins and evensong daily at the "canonical hours" of ten and four. Many gentlemen of the neighborhood attended these offices; and "some of the meaner sort of his parish did so love and reverence Mr. Herbert that they would let their plough rest when Mr. Herbert's saint's bell rung to prayers, that they might also offer their devotions to God with him, and would then return back to their plough." Skilled at music and accustomed to set his simpler poems to music, singing them to his lute, Herbert twice weekly walked into Salisbury to attend choral service and, thereafter, before returning to Bemerton, to play and sing his part at a gathering of amateur music-makers. On one of these walks to Salisbury, Herbert encountered a poor man whose battered horse had fallen under its load; and, putting off his canonical coat, he relieved the distress of man and beast. His musical friends expressed surprise at the soiled clothing of one customarily so trim and spotless; and one rebuked him for forgetting his dignity of birth and office. Herbert answered that "the thought of what he had done would prove music to him at midnight, and that the omission of it would have upbraided and made discord in his conscience. . . . And now let us tune our instruments."

Not always had Herbert been so disciplined to Christian humility. His ancestry was distinguished: on his father's side he descended from a line of valorous soldiers – suppressors, as royal stewards in the Welsh marches, of rebels, thieves, and outlaws; on his mother's side, from the Talbots, Devereux, and Greys, and many other noble families. His mother, Lady Magdalen, had Donne for devoted friend and, ultimately, for funeral eulogist. George was her fifth son; of the others, the eldest, Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury, was soldier, diplomat, biographer of his own adventurous career, author of the deistic *De Veritate*, a subtle and rare poet; Richard, after a learned education, betook himself to Flanders, where he won much reputation, both in battle and at duelling, and carried to his Flemish grave the scars of four and twenty wounds; William took his part in the Danish and Flemish wars; Thomas fought in Germany, sailed to the East Indies, served in the King's navy, was valiant in single combat; Henry, skillful at duelling, French, and the ways of court, became Master of the Revels, Gentleman of the King's Privy-Chamber, and possessor of a luxurious fortune.

Passion and choler were infirmities of all the Herberts; they were a strong, ambitious family. George shared their traits. Designs of a military career never possessed him – perhaps his frail constitution forbade; but by other secular ambitions he was genuinely stirred. At the age of sixteen he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, there to spend the next eighteen years. Though his pious mother had always intended him for the Anglican priesthood, and though at seventeen he wrote his mother a pair of sonnets eschewing profane love and verse, he gradually fastened hope on preferment. Soon Fellow of his College, he was elected in 1620 to the Public Oratorship of the University; and, encouraged by the course of his predecessors in the office, he hoped one day to become Secretary of State. His learning, wit, and elegance, both of tongue and person, won him the acclaim and the distinguished connections for which, at best, the Orator might hope. When King James bestowed upon the University Library his own volume, *Basilicon Doron,* Herbert made the official reply in a florid and extravagantly flattering letter, the tone of which may be judged from its conclusion: "*Peregrinis Academicis nostram invisentibus: Quid Vaticanam Bodleiumque objicis, Hospes? Unicus est nobis Bibliotheca Liber.*" The learned King, properly gratified, judged Herbert "the jewel of that university". Another extant example of Herbert's skill at panegyric – in Latin and Greek – found its occasion in the return of Prince Charles from his unsuccessful Spanish journey; and still another welcomed to Cambridge the ambassadors of his Catholic Majesty, the King of Spain.

During his undergraduate years, it was observed, Herbert dressed with elegance, kept at a distance from all his social inferiors, and took pride in his parts and parentage. His success as Orator won for him the admiration of Francis Bacon and Lancelot Andrewes and John Donne, as well as of eminent and powerful nobles. Often leaving the University, he attended the King, following him in his progresses. Says Walton candidly, "With . . . his annuity, and the advantage of his college, and of his oratorship, he enjoyed his genteel humor for clothes, and courtlike company, and seldom looked toward Cambridge unless the King was there, but then he never failed. . . ."

Anticipating a permanent removal from Cambridge to London, Herbert suffered rather sudden interruption in his secular rhythm. His most powerful friends, the Duke of Richmond and the Marquis of Hamilton, both died; and, shortly after them, King James. In retirement he weighed his diminished prospects of a career at court, considered again his mother's permanent and his own original intention for him. The balancing of advantages and prospects turned into a spiritual conflict. The struggle was scarcely of flesh against spirit: Herbert seems never to have known lust; it was a struggle of pride – in his ancestry, his learning, his wit, his elegance – against Christian humility.

Very much to Herbert's credit, he did not consider the mere transfer of his ambitions from one profession to another. The generality of clergy have been not unfairly portrayed in the novels of Miss Austen and Trollope: not worse than other men, not hypocrites or sensualists, they are still not conspicuously better; they aim to advance their estates, win preferment, to be as palpably prominent and successful as their schoolmates who have pursued law or business. Perhaps only a saint can be expected to say *nolo episcopari*; most clergymen boast no such high vocation.

For Herbert, as for William Law, Anglican saint of the next century, there were two ways of life, discrete not reconciled. The world esteems energy, valor, breeding, wit, self-respect; but, says *The Country Parson*, "the two highest points of life, wherein a Christian is most seen, are Patience and Mortification". In "The Pearl", the title of which designedly recalls St. Matthew's merchant who, finding a jewel of great price, sold all that he had in order to buy it, Herbert described what he surrendered – and for what. The ways of Learning, of Honor, of Pleasure, he wrote:

> *I know all these, and have them in my hand;*
> *Therefore, not sealed, but with open eyes,*
> *I fly to Thee, and fully understand*
> *Both the main sale and the commodities*
> *And at what rate and price I have thy love.*

The pattern of their lives is parallel in Herbert and Donne. Both had an early devotion to divinity; in both, it was stifled by secular ambition; both, a skeptic might say, took Orders only when their secular ambition proved frustrate. Yet, like à Becket, who, from being King Henry's merry companion, turned his ecclesiastical judge and foe, both these courtier poets proved capable of rigorous distinction; and, having made their decisions, they did not look back. Their subsequent years of piety and self-mortification demonstrated the sincerity of their resolves.

Acquainting a court friend with his intention, Herbert was urged to alter it, as degrading to his birth and ability; he replied: "Though the iniquity of the late times have made clergymen meanly valued, and the sacred name of priest contemptible, yet I will labor to make it honorable, by consecrating all my learning and all my poor abilities to advance the glory of that God that gave them. . . . And I will labor to be like my Saviour, by making humility lovely in the eyes of all men. . . ."

Herbert married, for prudential reasons; accepted the living of Foulston-cum-Bemerton-Capella, "changed his sword and silk clothes into a canonical coat", and began his work among the gentry and the cottagers of his small parish. Fastidious as he was, he must have found his rustic congregation a strain upon his sensibilities. He was determined to exact from his country folk that decorum in church which reverence demanded: they were not to talk during service, nor to sleep or gaze about at their neighbors, nor to lean forward or half-kneel at prayers, nor to make their responses "in a huddling or slubbering fashion – gaping or scratching the head, or spitting even in the midst of their answer". Nor could he tolerate untidiness in the church; it must be "kept clean, without dust or cobwebs; and, at great festivals, [must be] strewed and stuck with boughs, and perfumed with incense".

Outside of the church, however, he could allow himself no refinements. He must visit his parishioners as Christian souls, without respect to persons. Addison commends Sunday as serving, once in seven days, to insure the rustics a scrub, a shave, the donning of festival attire. But in his manual of instructions for the country parson, homilies preached first of all to himself, Herbert, recognizing that most men carry their best clothes and their best behavior to church, only to doff them next day, bids the priest call upon his parishioners when they are "wallowing in the midst of their affairs"; and in the pursuit of his pastoral office he may not disdain to "enter into the poorest cottage, though he even creep into it, and though it smell never so loathsomely. For both God is there also, and those for whom God died."

From childhood a dweller in London or the university, Herbert sought to adapt himself and his ministry to his rural parish. At the end of his first sermon – learned and elaborate as if to show his virtuosity – he announced his intention thereafter to preach in plain language and to practical end. A friend and admirer of Bishop Andrewes, he renounced the ingenious exegetical methods of that divine, together with his wit, learning, and eloquence; and, finding that simple people, who attend little to exhortations, relish and remember stories and sayings, he utilized such illustrations.

Adages formed a favorite study with men like Andrewes and Selden; but *Jacula Prudentum, or Outlandish Proverbs, Sentences, Etc.*, first published eight years after Herbert's death, was undoubtedly drawn upon by its compiler for use in his parish sermons; and some of these maxims of homely, traditional wisdom may be found scattered through the poems, especially "The Church Porch". This prelude to *The Temple* seems, indeed, a cento of aphorisms which, though assembled into six-line stanzas, might fittingly, by virtue of their epigrammatic compactness, have been versified in Johnsonian couplets; in a couplet, indeed, each stanza ends. "The Church Porch" compends a moral philosophy, classical and popular – such maxims of Stoic and Aristotelian thought as have passed into the treasury of enlightened common sense. By way of preparation to Christian devotion, Herbert here reviews for the reader the standards of decent living, the morals of the humanist; like Newman, in his portrait of a gentleman, he delineates the character generally accepted as the highest – at the level of what the eighteenth century would have called "natural religion". Only, Christian humanist that he was, Herbert does not antithesize "natural" and supernatural virtues. There is, of course, a false wisdom of this world which is, indeed, foolishness with God; but there is also a wisdom sound so far as it goes – a classical wisdom which revelation does not abolish but complete, a wisdom represented for the people in the proverbs of all nations and for the humane in the *Analects*, the *Nichomachean Ethics*, and the *De Officiis*. In this spirit, Herbert commends temperance ("drink not the third glass"); the avoidance of smut and profanity; in the management of money, the mean between parsimony and prodigality; the proper use of conversation; and, most centrally and most spiritedly, the virtues of self-examination, self-control, constancy, integration.

When thou dost purpose aught within thy power
Be sure to do it, though it be but small:
Constancy knits the bones and makes us tower
When wanton pleasures beckon us to thrall.
    Who breaks his own bond, forfeiteth himself:
    What nature made a ship, he makes a shelf.

. . . .

Who keeps no guard upon himself is slack
And rots to nothing at the next great thaw.
Man is a shop of rules, a well-truss'd pack,
Whose every parcel underwrites a law.
    Loose not thyself, nor give thy humors way:
    God gave them to thee under lock and key.

In *The Country Parson*, Herbert counsels the preacher to use illustrations, especially those which are drawn from daily life and from the experiences habitual with his parishioners; and he remarks that this is in accord with Holy Scripture, which "condescends to the naming of a plough, a hatchet, a bushel, leaven, boys piping and dancing, — showing that things of ordinary use are not only to serve in the way of drudgery, but to be washed and cleansed, and serve for lights even of heavenly truth". Again, discoursing on the Parson's "completeness" as a parish *person*, capable of curing the simple legal and medical maladies of his neighbors, Herbert recommends the cultivation of herbs, since not only will these plants of the field prove able vicars for exotic drugs, but from them the parson, like his Saviour, may draw apposite metaphors. This Christ did that "by familiar things he might make his doctrine slip the more easily into the hearts even of the meanest" and especially that "laboring people, whom he chiefly considered, might have everywhere monuments of his doctrine; remembering in gardens his mustard-seed and lilies, in the fields his seed corn and tares. . . ." The servant is not above his master.

None of Herbert's parish homilies survives. But even when writing for himself and not for "laboring people" he can use such analogies as they would apprehend. "The Country Parson, as soon as he awakes on Sunday, presently falls to work, and seems to himself so as a marketman is when the market day comes, or a shopkeeper when customers use to come in. His thoughts are full of making the best of the day, and contriving it to his best gains." In *The Temple*, too, homely figures prevail.

Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

The constant man is he

Who rides his sure and even trot
While the world now rides by, now lags behind.

Sunday, Christ set aside for men's spiritual life

That as each beast his manger knows
Man might not of his fodder miss.

In God's love, "more than in bed, I rest".

Were Herbert's poems, then, deliberately written for the unlearned, the "workers"? Probably not: *The Temple* is Herbert's spiritual autobiography; he never published it himself, and left it to his friend, Nicholas Ferrar, to decide whether it should appear: "if he think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul, let it be made public; if not, let him burn it". But assuredly *The Country Parson* provides the best commentary on *The Temple*; and the counsels and rules for the former articulate the spirit of the latter. Surely, too, Christian humility may well have led Herbert to write such poems as would exhibit not his learning but such simplicity as might speak to all. What is the meaning of his two poems with the common title, "Jordan"? Perhaps he recalled the Syrian Naaman who, bidden by Elisha to wash in the Jordan, in order to be cleansed of his leprosy, cried out, affronted, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" Of Quarles, Tom Fuller says that he "drank of Jordan instead of Helicon, and slept on Mount Olivet for his Parnassus"; and the antithesis of the rival waters and rival mounts is elsewhere, contemporarily, repeated. The theme of both poems is clear. Secular verse may require rhetorical adornment – nightingales and purling streams, curling metaphors, ornate invention; not so sacred poetry: "Shepherds are honest people; let them sing." That washing in the Jordan – or drinking of it – savored of pious condescension would seem the implication of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who, acknowledging the sanctity of his brother's last years, thinks his English poems "far short of expressing those perfections he had in the Greek and Latin tongues".

Nor does Herbert eschew the "literary" merely in his metaphors. His diction is that of the English Bible – not pedantically Anglo-Saxon, but habitually, as

Coleridge has called it, "pure, manly, and unaffected". In syntax he rarely employs inversion or any other kind of poetic dislocation: his sentence structure is that of good conversation – though firm, yet easy and supple.

From his secular self Herbert preserved two marked traits – his love of music, constantly productive of metaphors, and his love of order. And music audibly rehearses order. What is a dissonance but a tone alien to the chordal triad? Harmony weaves individual voices into an associative pattern. Herbert's favorite figure, that of tuning the lute, symbolizes the adjustment of strayed strings to the pitch of the constant, or of all to some objective standard. Constantly in need of such attention as that instrument was, it aptly expressed the unstable nature of man. Herbert's poems portray, as he said, "the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul"; but he identifies the end of religion as the submission of man's will to God's.

Certain external kinds of order naturally attracted Herbert's temperament: he liked hierarchy in church and state; the discipline of institutions and liturgies; the decorum of a well-ordered household. In his poetry, he devised intricate stanza patterns, into which to pour his meditations, and, having initiated the pattern, persisted in its repetition throughout his poem. It is Order which gives

all things their set forms and hours,
Makes of wild woods sweet walks and bowers.

Art is the ordering of landscapes and inscapes. By the obvious kinds of spontaneity – free verse, free thought, free love — Herbert was not at all tempted.

His conflicts furrowed a deeper soil. The essence of religion is the reduction to order of the human will; the mark of that effected order is peace. Dante, wondering that those who inhabit the lowest room in Paradise should lack restless jealousy of their superiors, is assured by one of these spirits that, if they desired a higher place, their wills would be discordant from that of God, who assigned them their places; "*la sua volontate e nostra pace*". Yet more than of poetry, the passage is a touchstone of religion, for no sounder test can be applied to spiritual writers than this: that they see as central not the intellect or the affections but the will; that they find the issue of this ordered and tuned will in harmonic peace. False prophets, of religion as well as of culture, are ever promising some labor-saving device, some formula for getting rich or learned without industry, wise or holy without discipline. Like Fénélon, but without taint of "quietism", Herbert never betrays us to such delusion. He sees human life — its inconstancy (our "twenty several selves"), the insatiability of its desires; and, in his moving poem, "The Pulley", he represents God as having endowed man with beauty, wisdom, honor, pleasure, reserving, as the divine gift, only peace. This inner order, the submission of his will to God's, was not a temperamental endowment of Herbert's; and, to effect it, he endured those conflicts which the poems re-enact.

Occasionally Herbert seeks to incarnate its theme in the very form of a poem. There is "Denial" with its five-line pattern, the last line left unrhymed till the final stanza when the soul, before "untuned, unstrung", attains to unison with God's harmony; in "Grief", verses are bidden to keep their measures for some lover

> *Whose grief allows him music and a rhyme;*
> *For mine excludes both measure, tune, and time.*
> *—Alas, my God.*

The last, rhymeless, truncated line exemplifiies the breakdown. In "Home", written on the Advent, the last stanza practises a similar adaptation. The poem on Trinity Sunday uses three-line stanzas; "The Altar" and "Easter Wings" body forth the things they signify.

These innocent feats of ingenuity elicited undue reprehension in Addison's paper on False Wit and from neo-classical critics in general. Relatively few in number, they present no analogy to the meaningless freakeries of such current contemporary poets as disdain punctuation or print their lyrical prose in splintered lines the length of which depends on no palpable principle, metrical, rhetorical, or intellectual. Herbert's ingenuities proceed from a principle which is analogous to onomatopoeia and as readily apprehended: the adaptation of form to sense, or structure to theme.

Most of his poetry is conventionally, though very variously, patterned: of his 169 poems, 116 are composed in stanza forms which are not repeated. Having surrendered learned allusion, poetic diction, having adopted a conversational syntax, Herbert could still, with pure conscience, retain the art of metrical invention, an art which could deter no reader from apprehension of his meaning and which would allow the poet to practise an exact care in the articulation of his experience. The craftsman can often control paints or sounds as he cannot the more refractory materials of his life; but, in the proportion and harmony of art, we apprehend, in parable, the ordering of the world within. In Herbert's stanzaic invention and precision of craftsmanship he shows the survival of his temperamental fastidiousness; he also, wittingly or not, creates that tension between inner struggle and outer neatness which gives living distinction to his poetry.

This tension, this union, reflects the nature of Herbert's spirit. Humanly rebellious against the submission of his will to God's, Herbert was untempted by petty rebellions and idiosyncratic repugnances. Many of his ardent contemporaries identified religion with "enthusiasm" – some private revelation vouchsafed to the individual, with extempore prayer and discourses by preachers unstained by the laying on of episcopal hands. Such spirits, whose equivalents abound today, habitually contrast dogma and institutionalism with freedom and sincerity – as though every man who thought independently must arrive at heretical conclusions; as though the only man who could recite a creed sincerely must be its inventor. No antiquarian, no cherisher of futile relics, Herbert, like the country people whom he served, was a "lover of old customs" – when, in addition to preserving a continuity with the past, they were capable of maintaining significance for the present. Herbert's religion is at once traditional and personal; an inheritor, he appropriates. Loving the "ancient and pious ordinances" of the Church – among which he specifically includes auricular confession – he is patently no ritualist; without claim to an inner light, he everywhere reveals a genuine inner life.

The Anglican claim to comprehensiveness seems frequently to be a betrayal of integrity, a mere tolerated babble of contradictory tongues; and one may opine that, if the English Church were really to suffer disestablishment, it would break up into three or more ecclesiastical bodies, leaving a considerable population of its respectable Laodiceans to the tender mercies of secular sages. Of self-conscious tolerance, Herbert was innocent; and he is comprehensive only in so far as he is central in his experience and finely proportioned in his emphases. The *Via Media* may have been, in its origin, a mere shrewdly Elizabethan "settlement" excluding thorough-going extremes but without any center save compromise; too often since, it has proved little more than that. In Herbert, however, Catholic and Evangelical meet; and, if there be any Christian poetry in English which transcends sectarian bounds, it is his.

About Herbert's religious experience there is, for all its depth, a normality which fails one in some other religious poets. In Crashaw, for example, it is not merely the baroque method which alienates, or even the lush sensuousness of some of the conceits; it is the masochism of the poet's temperament; his preoccupation, psychologically as well as metaphorically, with wounds; it is the almost hysterical ecstasy which he makes his poetic staple. "The Bugler's First Communion" of Hopkins mixes religion with an abnormal sentiment toward male youth; in the "terrible sonnets" the intensity, while genuine and convincing, emerges from a special kind of tension rarely experienced.

Herbert's instrument is delicate of timbre and limited of gamut; not the sustainedly sonorous organ nor the imperious

tuba, mirum spargens sonum
per sepulcra regionum

but viol or lute, apt for accompaniment, adjusted to the chamber and the closet. Moderate in pitch, its tone can, without hysterical tightening, rise to joy, and, fastidiously avoiding the whine and the sob, sink to pathos. This control of scale, this restrained modulation, makes his a poetry which, unlike that of Crashaw and Hopkins, can be read in every mood. With this fine moderation of tone there goes, too, a poetic integrity which at once braces and quiets the reader. Whether or not he learned his architecture from Donne, Herbert composes a lyric as a whole; and he should be quoted, as, to his advantage, Vaughan may often be, not by lines but by stanzas, or, better still, poems. Admirable phrases there are, of course, like "church bells beyond the stars heard" in that brilliant and tender poem, "Prayer". It remains true, however, that the verse which, in its context and as climax, moves the reader cannot be detached; for it is by virtue of its position in the whole poem and as pervaded by a memory of what has gone before that it acquires this light and warmth. In some of his fine miniatures, the finale – like Milton's in "Lycidas" and *Paradise Lost* – is a diminuendo. The vigor of "The Collar" expounds dramatically the motives to rebellion; the motive to submission finds utterance in but one tender word, the acknowledgment of submission in two more. To feel the success of this poem one would have to quote the whole.

Not a romantic, Herbert does not slide from the glittering to the vacuous but preserves a relatively even level of attainment. For an adequate perception of his art, one should know not only those justly cherished poems, "The Pulley", "The Collar", and "Virtue", but also at least the following: "Prayer", "Sin", "The Pearl", "The Agony", "Faith", "Evensong", "Sunday", "Peace", "Aaron", "The Odor", "Love", "Discipline", "The Forerunners", and "The Flower".

Through the influence of Coleridge in England and Emerson in America, Herbert, whose *Temple* sold copiously in the seventeenth century, did not want, in the nineteenth century, for readers capable of some justice to his spirit and to his art. In addition to this audience of the "literary", he continued to reach the devout, for whom *The Temple* took its place with the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, Law's *Serious Call*, and Keble's *Christian Year*. These nineteenth-century audiences have dispersed; but it has been Herbert's fortune to survive changes both of ideology and of idiom. With our own time, the reaction against romantic and Victorian poetry has led to a revaluation of the seventeenth-century lyric; Donne, restored to something like the position he held for his own generation, has induced the study of those poets, chiefly religious, who followed him in the renunciation of Petrarchan amorosity. In the vogue of these introspectionists, familiarly but inaccurately called "metaphysical", Herbert has shared.

Donne's program excluded mythological and other "literary" decoration; it purposed to strip from poetry all her gaudy but loose robes, reducing her to firm flesh, lean enough to reveal, under its texture, the structural bones. For conventionally hyperbolic laud of love and mistress, he substituted realistic, but by no means always cynical, analysis of what he had experienced, recording it subtly – since his was a complex nature, but with rigorous candor. Others besides Dr. Johnson have felt Donne's wit to be a brilliant exhibitionism; but this is to miss Donne's aim. Resolved to transfer the whole of himself to his verses, he saw no reason to deny or conceal his erudition in geography, astronomy, physiology, the dialectic of the Schools. He draws his analogies from his own universe of discourse, and illustrates love by science rather than roses and nightingales.

Chiefly, Donne sought to elicit poetry out of reasoning – not *de rerum natura* but about his own problems. Yet the stretching of analysis upon a bed of meter does not make it poetry: to escape being mere mnemonic prose, poetry must either intersperse its statements with images or, if it can, think in symbols. As the quotation in a research paper may but repeat the compiler's transition-and-digest, so the poet's simile may not advance his thought but merely illustrate it. This redundance Donne eschewed in the endeavor, at which he was frequently successful, to make analysis move *pari passu* with analogy. Though he also makes use of metaphorical flashes, Donne's characteristic device is a protracted metaphor, or "conceit", disclosing successive but interpenetrating points of likeness between the objects relationally identified. Thus Christ, between Good Friday and Easter,

For these three days became a mineral.
He was all gold when He lay down, but rose

All tincture, and doth not alone dispose
Leaden and iron wills to good, but is
Of power to make e'en sinful flesh like his.

In such a passage, the prose meaning and the metaphor are not disjunct, as text and application, but coalesce.

Donne's poetic achievement was not only uneven but essentially based on a personal method incapable of full transference to other alien temperaments. He united erudition, an introspective and subtly casuistical intellect, a fancy productive of researched and ingenious metaphors with an imaginative intensity often sufficient to fuse these ingredients. If Donne be elected as type of the "metaphysical" poet, then most of the names currently grouped with his may not, taken at their centers, be so classed; indeed, a far less confusing procedure is to attempt no common denominator of the group, but, instead, to trace the influence of that complex person and poet upon his juniors, an influence which, like a comprehensive will, broke up the estate into many and various legacies.

His close reasoning, amorous casuistry, and syntax — those long sentences parenthetically interrupted — reappear only in Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who seems the closest to Donne, but who lacked Donne's metaphorical fertility and variety. Carew, a poet still underestimated, not only wrote the best contemporary analysis of Donne's style, but achieved, with a less complex nature and a less dissonant music, some distinguished love poetry of a sort impossible without Donne's predecession. In no really significant sense is Crashaw a "metaphysical": Giles Fletcher and Marino supply the plausible paternity; his mind, though perverse, is simple; his syntax lacks involution; his characteristic images are sensual, not scientific. Traherne, an overrated discovery, completely wants Donne's grasp of the poem as a tightly woven pattern; he sprawls diffusely; and, though sometimes catching the piercing sweetness of Vaughan's "Retreat", he is ordinarily not so much childlike as childish. Save for "The Night", Vaughan built few poems; capable of extraordinary lines and more than commonly attesting inaugurations, he ordinarily cannot knit or sustain. What chiefly gives these poets their legitimate connection with the name of Donne is their production of not hymns, justifications of Deity, metrical paraphrases of Scripture and Creed but autobiographical lyrics in analysis of religious experience.

George Herbert's relation to Donne seems to have been rather personal than literary. Sometimes attributed to Donne are his structural neatness, his surrender of the mythological allusions frequent in his Latin poems, his "conceits" or startling figures.

Only the sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives,
But, though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

The student of *The Country Parson* will, however, be aware of rival explanations for these characteristics. *The Temple*, chiefly written during the years at Bemerton, rarely draws its metaphors from travel, science, or philosophy. Herbert's "seasoned timber" offers a shock not because the simile is researched but because, unexpectedly, it juxtaposes the world of ethics and the world of the carpenter. Donne's conceits, like his diction, are now homely, now learned – departing from anticipation by two roads. Herbert follows but one – the road of Christ's parables as well. Again, Herbert's nature had neither the complexity nor the intensity of Donne's; and these temperamental differences, together with Herbert's artistic sincerity, make difficult any attempt to trace palpable derivations.

That he should approach Herbert through Donne is a proper procedure for the literary historian; but for the reader of poetry and the aspirant to the good life such preparation may be foregone. Eighteenth-century essays in blank verse there are – like Dyer's *Fleece* and Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination* – which come to intelligibility as poems only when we know that they echo, Augustanly, the thunder of Milton; yet, when we are possessed of that knowledge, *Paradise Lost* shames them into the status of period pieces. Herbert's muse, though not without her own ancestry, evokes no recollection of a stature beyond her own and satisfies by virtue of her own provision.

America and the Coming Order

Stebelton H. Nulle

Every empire and civilization", writes Christopher Dawson in his latest book, "waits for the hour when the sentence of the watchers goes forth and its kingdom is numbered and finished. The spirit of life goes out of its social traditions and institutions and a new age is begun." By this time it must be manifest to all reflective men that the liberal democratic state is drawing near its end. In some parts of the world it has disappeared already and it is only a matter of time until it will no longer exist anywhere. This essay is a brief attempt to account for this phenomenon and to offer a solution.

The liberal democratic state was the product of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century circumstances and premises and reached its zenith in Victorian times. In other words, it was the politico-philosophic expression of the economic order now in a state of disintegration. It began as an insurgent movement against authority and, in its halcyon days, represented a bolder conception of human values and possibilities than any previous system, inspired by the larger-scale economic life that arose in the eighteenth century. In the words of Rousseau, it was to provide "a form of association in which each man, while uniting himself with all, shall remain as free as before and obey only himself". Repudiating the autocratic régimes with their remnants of mediaevalism, it stood for an individualist, democratic, and competitive organization of society.

Now freedom is a negative idea and in the struggle for it bonds are broken. By the later nineteenth century most of these objectives were in some sort realized and liberalism had nothing definite to offer. It lost its revolutionary fervor and became complacent and defensive, satisfied with social patchwork. In the meantime the masses, hastily enfranchised without adequate safeguards, were unhappily demonstrating their political incompetence; while at the same time unrestricted individualism was demoralizing and threatening to destroy the whole social fabric with its violence and corruption. Relatively speaking, the inequalities of wealth were greater and the promised opportunity for every human being for full development of his powers had not materialized. The men of property who had forged and used the liberal state as its class instrument were on the whole intelligent and organized to lead. The enlarged electorate, however, was neither of these things, and a decline in intelligent leadership coincided with an increasing complexity of social and economic problems which demanded more statesmanship and long-range planning than at any time in history. For all these problems liberalism offered only palliatives. Vague uneasiness and disillusionment was the result, leading to the increasing rejection of many liberal principles in favor of more and more government interference. As early as 1913, Hilaire Belloc was able to forecast the servile state.

While all this was taking place, science was gradually undermining what was left of the traditional culture inherited from the Middle Ages. Even the philosophical foundation of liberalism was not spared. For a time no new culture compatible with scientific knowledge arose to take its place, with a new organization of emotions and new valuations. Cultural and political disintegration, then, went on hand in hand; but for a time the abounding material prosperity promised to provide adequate motives for existence. Man, it seemed, could live by bread alone, *panem et circenses*. This was the "age of sophistication". But with the war and the economic breakdown that followed it has come final disenchantment. At first this produced an incredulous unwillingness to believe that the last act of the drama which opened with the Renascence was at last played out. Makeshift liberal compromises and improvisations such as "progressivism" and the "New Deal" ensued. Then came an appeal to basic principles, a search for leadership and collective social plans for building a new world.

It is not a question of whether the infirmities of liberal democracy can be overcome. The conclusive thing is that confidence in it has been badly shaken and this is as fatal as for a commander to lose the trust of an army on the field of battle. The parliamentary system no longer has the air of finality it had before 1914, and debating assemblies of rival rhetors and politicians have shown their unawareness and inadequacy in the face of modern problems. The decisive words are spoken elsewhere. Twenty years after a war to save it, the current version of democracy is felt to be contrary to the spirit of the age, morally unsatisfying, a cause for which men will no longer spring to arms. Life has gone out of it and it is coming to be something of a bore.

The best answer to liberals like Professor Dewey, who urge the claims of a renascent liberalism to reverse its methods and to direct the work of social reorganization, is the pragmatic one. Nothing better illustrates the impotence of the liberal state or is more likely to add to its discredit than the alternative before the voters in the forthcoming quadrennial election. In the midst of one of the great crises in history, they will choose between an ineffectual administration, feebly wavering between traditionalism and reconstruction, and a futile body of rival politicians, clamorous for power but lacking, even if successful, the leadership and resourcefulness to use it. Can anything be more irrelevant and unreal? Where is the integration of "freed intelligence" with social action? Rather, they are "the hollow men, the stuffed men", whose dried voices when they whisper together are quiet and meaningless.

It is not easy for men reared in the liberal democratic tradition to face these facts and accept in full their implications. Like Edmund Burke they cling obstinately to the old, emotion-charged political faith (as if all forms of government were not provisional) and look with aversion and dismay upon the appearance of the new. Such a one is the author of *It Can't Happen Here*, whose uncritical views do his heart more credit than his head. Like other so-called intellectuals, the reaction of Sinclair Lewis to what, for want of a better name, we may refer to here as fascism, is emotional rather than reasoned. He refuses to see in it anything but Jew-baiting, castor-oil, and concentration camps. So far as his "Corpo" state is motivated at all, it is "explained" as something artificial and reactionary, financed by big business in the interests of existing class-relations and monopoly capitalism. Curiously enough, two old Lewis stock characters, the Catholic priest and the persecuted scholar, people whom the author evidently respects and admires (witness *Arrowsmith* and *Elmer Gantry*), duly make their appearance. Nothing better demonstrates the confusion of the author, for these two stand for the same principles that lie at the root of fascism: authority, hierarchy, and discipline.

The picture of the "pre-Corpo" world of a commonplace, small-town editor, with trivial, irresponsible children and a furtive *liaison*, was drawn by a friendly hand. It was meant to be typical of America today. "See," says the author in effect, "this is our world, the kind of world these vulgar fascists would destroy." Out of their own mouths they condemn themselves. Let any reader of *It Can't Happen Here* ask himself if this old world or this old life was worth preserving, worth fighting for; or whether it had within itself the means of its own salvation. In this meaningless world, even editor Doremus Jessup "felt the insecurity, the confusion, the sense of futility of trying to do anything more permanent than shaving or eating breakfast that was general to the country. He could no longer plan for himself or for his dependents as the citizens of this once unsettled country had planned since 1620."

Is such a society capable of evoking the enthusiasm, the exaltation, the driving-power needed to lift us out of our *impasse*? Is its obsolete philosophy likely to supply the looked-for leadership? Mighty as it was a century ago, liberalism today represents a political and social "lag". In Spengler's phrase, it is "the Zeitgeist of the day before yesterday". Its adherents are confused and divided, feeble in thought and action, with no common answer for any real issue facing them. Their program resembles the instructions of the baffled monarch in the fairy tale: "Go to *there*, don't know where, and bring back *that*, don't know what." Furthermore, there is no organization to hold them together for effective educational and political action. Their main appeal is sentimental, to a vague humanitarianism and social idealism. Four years ago H. G. Wells stated the problem and flung a challenge to the students of the Liberal Summer School at Oxford when he said:

> When I speak of Liberalism developing a backbone I mean nothing less than the deliberate organization of an education, a definite Liberal education, and a discipline, a definite Liberal discipline, and a program, a definite guiding program for human liberation and the attainment of the world state. I mean the reorientation of the objectives and indeed of the whole lives of those who would call themselves Liberals, to a world plan and to the discipline and education needed to carry it out. . . . I am asking for a Liberal Fascisti, for enlightened Nazis.

So far this challenge has not been taken up, nor is it likely to be.

II

Everywhere men are in search of a new faith. At bottom their unrest and maladjustment is not economic but spiritual and emotional. Something is needed to take the place of the religious sanctions upon which political and social life used to rest. Now that the utilitarian individualism of the liberal capitalist order has proved its hollowness, there is a craving for new values, for a new social idealism. Foremost in the movement are the young, disdaining the neutral intellectualism of the liberals and calling for affirmations and leadership. Never before, perhaps, has there been such a multitude of young people with imaginations fired by visions of social justice and anxious to dedicate themselves to a common cause. The reason for this is to be seen in the estimate that of the twenty millions between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four (inclusive) one-fourth to one-half are wholly unoccupied. Gone is the cynical materialism of the jazz age, when the future seemed to smile and beckon and there were jobs for everybody. It is most significant that the new political idealism is closely linked with the youth movements. No forward movement is possible without them.

What form will the new faith take? If we are to witness a continued development of science and technology, with an ever increasing power of determining the *conditions* of life; if, in other words, we are to have a civilization based upon science, there must be new loyalties and values to determine the *quality* of life that men lead, individually and in the mass. There must be something other than the old, self-seeking individualism, the aimless materialism and pursuit of pleasure that followed the triumph of secularism in modern times, if a mechanized social order very like that depicted in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is not to become a reality. As Christopher Dawson well says:

Society is not a mere collection of irresponsible individuals, nor is it a machine for the production of wealth; it is a spiritual organism in which each individual and every class and profession has its own functions to fulfill and its own rights and duties in relation to the whole. This organic conception of society involves on the one hand a mutual dependence and responsibility between its members and on the other the principles of hierarchy and authority.

In a very real sense our problem is that of the failing Roman Empire of the third century, in its attempt to find in the cults of Mithra and Sol Invictus some unifying principle which would preserve it from the vicious materialism which threatened to destroy it.

If the ideologies of communism and fascism did not exist in the twentieth century it would be necessary to create them. Since they are in being and there is nothing likely to challenge them seriously, we can do no better than examine their credentials and choose between them. Here are two compelling programs, offering at once solutions for our political and economic problems, release for our moral and spiritual unrest, and a new framework for a fresh start towards a planned society. Properly speaking, the movements are really two aspects of the same thing, adapting itself to different levels of culture and civilization, and in practice they will tend to approximate one another more and more. There is the same spirited leadership, militant organization of devotees, discipline and unity of purpose, the same social control of economic forces, planned economy and recognition of national interests before private advantage. In the last analysis both movements make man, rather than God, the "ultimate synthesizing object of all human endeavor". In the place left vacant by the growth of secularism and the decline of the traditional *Weltanschauung* in modern times, both of them set up the authoritarian state as a new sacred order. In Marxian language, the state becomes "more than itself" that it may cease to be the mere class state. Thus will the human need of an integrating *quid divinum*, some spiritual conception at once transcending and magnifying the self, some fixed social and intellectual principles, be satisfied.

There are, however, important details in which they differ, and it is on the basis of these differences that fascism seems to be sounder and more practicable. Space does not permit the examination of more than two of these. To begin with, it is frankly nationalistic while communism talks in terms of world-groups and of single and universal solutions. The one postulates a mass, the other a folk. It would seem that fascism is sounder in recognizing the deep-seated prejudices and limitations and, on the other hand, the potentialities of present-day humanity. Most of our national states are of recent origin, the products of liberal victories over old dynastic monarchies. England, France, and Spain, alone of the great nations, go back to the end of the Middle Ages. Formal American statehood dates from the late eighteenth century, while Germany, Italy, and Russia are still more recent. Now, national feeling is represented by communists and liberal internationalists as a petty, outmoded, and largely sinister principle. As a matter of fact, a true, organic nation has never existed, particularly in the last-named states of recent origin. National feeling and national loyalty are such lofty and stupendous things that the realization of them is slow, difficult, and incomplete. The human mind has no spontaneous inclination to widespread benevolence and co-operation. It is not easy for the mass of men to think in larger terms than that of the parish pump or to be stirred by sympathies for any but the smallest and nearest groups. Thus far in history it has been only in wartime that men can forget their petty local interests and sacrifice their well-being in a common cause. Is this surprising when one considers how much older are the family, the tribe and the province than the nation? Or the difficulty of mental exchange and of transportation and the localization of economic activity until recent times? It has only been a century since human life in the West began to lose close touch with the locality. The undreamed-of expansion of transportation, communication, and economic range and scope in the past century, however, so broadened the sense of community and personal relationship that an expanding conception of the state is natural and imperative.

For years H. G. Wells has been pointing out this change of physical scale in human activities and demanding a responsible political organization of corresponding proportions to guide and rule over the new-scale community. This organization he calls the "competent receiver". As he says, "Vast general interests are becoming more important to mankind and they find no organ to serve them. They go about like souls seeking bodies." But, like the liberals of the last century, who were far too sanguine concerning men's readiness for freedom and co-operation and tried prematurely to realize a society of free individuals, Mr. Wells's outlook is far too panoramic and impractical.

It is time to recognize that the competent receiver must be national and not international in scale. If fascism is successful in leading the individual to think in terms of the national group to which he belongs, humanity will have taken an enormous stride towards the identification of the self with the world community, which seems to be the goal of history. Even if, as by a miracle, world unity could at once be realized, for ages it would be a purely external thing, lacking any inner unity of spirit. The republic of adult mankind cannot be populated by the childish minds of the present, enslaved by dwarfing mental habits and emotions. Considering all the obstacles, the problem of planning for an organic national unity is staggering enough and must for centuries to come precede hopes of real world unity. Even the Russians seem to have recognized the failure of communism as an international movement and their idea of world revolution is already giving way to a national communism. By accepting the League of Nations and European military alliances and, as Professor MacMurray has pointed out, by encouraging labor in its struggle with capital in each country independently, they are, more or less unconsciously, committed to a nationalist view. The authoritarian state, mature in form and national in scope, is another step, and a necessary step, in the direction of ultimate world unity. In due time fascism is certain to expand and consolidate beyond the present limited conception through larger and larger human sympathies until at last (unless, indeed, it is a dream) man will come into full possession of his inheritance that spins among the stars. The union of England, Scotland, and Wales into the United Kingdom demonstrates in a limited way, that the union of distinct, unobliterated nationalities is not chimerical.

Now much the same ultimate objectives can be accomplished through communism as through fascism, but at the cost of far more violence, suffering, and waste of life and property. In this lies the second and perhaps the more fundamental difference between the two. Fascism involves a more gradual (though eventually no less definite) breach with the past, since it is the response to historical circumstances and practical urgencies rather than of a doctrinaire interpretation of man's nature and of what is both past and yet to come. For some time to come a place can be found for many established forms, as for example in the field of religion or economics. It is neither necessary nor advisable to press on too rapidly. For example, Christianity or any universal religion will contribute to the furthering and preserving of the ideal of the community of mankind as a whole.

This does not mean that the fascist state is to be realized without the pangs that accompany the birth of every new social order. Just as the rise of the modern state in the sixteenth century necessitated the destruction of many mediaeval liberties and privileges, so its maturing entails the extinction or limitation of many rights which liberals today regard as inalienable. To a great extent this process of enlargement has already become a *fait accompli.* For many years the state has been quietly encroaching on the domain that used to belong to individual freedom, so that whichever group gains control of it will at the same time take over the direction of a large part of human activity. The rapid annexation of more of the residue in some parts of Europe has been attended with considerable violence, due to the resistance of the Frondeurs of our time, the diehards and the laggards. Sentimental adherents of the waning order are fond of harping on this aspect of the change. A simple historical analogy reveals the triviality of such a standpoint. For example, a view of the reigns of Henry VIII or Elizabeth which took account only of the terrorism, the executions, the false propaganda, and the bad faith which ushered in the new order in England, and failed to recognize its solid achievements, would be apparent to any sensible person.

Furthermore, the totalitarian state actually represents a new and more faithful interpretation of democracy and carries its principles to loftier heights. The direction of affairs by an élite, bound by ideals of social justice and embodying the highest aspirations of the nation, is not contrary to the spirit of Americanism. Something very like this was what our incipient democracy hoped to achieve through more or less popular elections, and the Fathers were confident that under their arrangements the *aristoi* would always be called to lead. How ghastly was their miscalculation! With the new forces of production in private control, popular franchise and parliamentary institutions came to disguise the domination of selfish interests, while the welfare of the national community as a whole was sacrificed to the special privileges of a few. Between the ignorance and indifference of the average voter and the self-seeking materialism of the propertied classes and professional politicians, the capitalist state is falling as surely as by the hands of traitors.

Under the fascist rephrasing of democracy, government is made vital and personal to everyone and politics becomes a lofty thing because it embodies a philosophy which looks further than the next campaign and the paltry reforming preoccupations of liberalism. The key to a man's place in the new society will be his capacity and not, as it is now, what he owns. This is the *carrière ouverte aux talents* of the French Revolution, with party membership a high privilege and responsibility, a fearsome prize for those who rise to grasp it. For the masses it substitutes the uplifting sense of partnership and responsibility in a great and glorious enterprise for the inert concurrence in the notion that government is a pastime of the few.

A rudimentary kind of totalitarian state now exists in Germany and Italy. Depression and disillusionment with the old order first reached their climax here. As these conditions spread, fascism will spread. Already America has made some faltering attempts at political and economic readjustment, but far more intelligent and thoroughgoing changes are required. First there must be a recognition of the nature and magnitude of the problems, far-sighted planning for social and political release and emancipation from faded formulae, and a surgical ruthlessness in cutting across old lines. We should not be deterred or prejudiced by the crudities and shortcomings of any particular form of the totalitarian state now in being. It must be remembered that the movements have only just got under way in Italy and Germany, and the minds and hearts of men were not prepared for the great change in human affairs. As a consequence the movements are still amateurish, improvised, and provisional. "It is by no means impossible", admits Professor Florinski, however, "that the real Fascist and National Socialist revolutions are merely beginning." Already they have released vast creative forces and have overcome the sense of frustration and gloom. Their real test will be their ability to realize the new economic and social order in the expanded concept of the state.

Thoughtful, intelligent people who love their country should face these realities, recognize the signs of the times, and begin at once the task of elaborating, expounding, and propagating the sentiments expressed here, so that the new era in human affairs will come with fewer shocks and will not be a cruel disillusionment and hollow mockery of an ideal. Fearless leaders and trained experts must be identified and prepared for power and the work of reconstruction. Liberal idealists should recognize the danger of associating themselves with the dying order and becoming involved in its ruin, thus allowing the control of the new one to pass by default to the selfish and the stupid. Fascism is coming to America. Whether it falls into the gross and unclean hands of the kind of people Sinclair Lewis has described or into those of enlightened, self-disciplined samurai, who combine the coherence of will and idea with provision for a scientific spirit of free criticism, depends upon what we do now.

André Malraux: From Death to Revolution

GEOFFREY STONE

THE appearance in 1934 of Haakon M. Chevalier's translation of André Malraux's *La Condition Humaine** was an occasion for much rejoicing by critics of leftist tendency. At last, it was said, the novel of Marxian revolution had come to maturity; tragedy had re-entered literature; and the individual, whom bourgeois novelists like Mann and Joyce had been disintegrating, once more attained moral significance and purpose; Marxism had proved itself not incompatible with the production of literature equal to the best of the past. One critic, William Troy, definitely announced the dawn of a new age: "The real importance of *Man's Fate* is that it marks the beginning of a new period of literary creation in which the artist, in order to give strength and beauty to his work, need only observe, understand, and record the operation in character and conduct of values already present in experience." "No one," said Lionel Abel in *The Nation*, "can have read *Man's Fate* without feeling that here at last is a contemporary novelist whose technique is *not* calculated to snuff out the aspirations of his characters to moral meaning and individuality." The book for Horace Gregory was "a search-light piercing deep walls of darkness" and

* ***Man's Fate*** **by André Malraux, translated by Haakon M. Chevalier (Smith and Haas, 1934).**

showed more clearly than any other novel of our time "the problems of the individual in mass action". And Edmund Wilson earlier declared that M. Malraux had "something one had not yet found in fiction to the same intense degree: the peculiar psychological atmosphere of stress, with its own attitudes, moralities, passions, which is coming to pervade the contemporary world".

Man's Fate was not the first of M. Malraux's books to appear in English; his *Les Conquérants** was published in translation in 1929, but it received little attention, for the great hegira leftwards had not then begun, and the critics who were later to hail *Man's Fate* were not even gazing from the windows of their ivory towers upon the politico-fictional scene. M. Malraux's third book to be translated, *La Voie Royale***, showed no concern with political questions; it was respectfully received, but enthusiasm could of course not run high where the problem of the Revolution was not being agitated. Now is issued Mr. Chevalier's translation of a rather long short-story, *Le Temps du Mépris****, a selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club. The book contains a "Foreword" by Waldo Frank, who finds in it what other critics found in *Man's Fate*: an ideal combination of the revolutionist and the artist. ". . . André Malraux has an honorable place among the too scant number of creative writers scattered throughout the world, who, by their translation of cosmic and social forces into forms of personal experience, are doing the artist's share in the creating of a new world order."

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* *The Conquerors*, translated by Winifred Stephens Whale (Harcourt, Brace, 1929).

** *The Royal Way*, translated by Stuart Gilbert (Smith and Haas, 1935).

*** DAYS OF WRATH *by André Malraux, translated by Haakon M. Chevalier, with a Foreword by Waldo Frank* (RANDOM HOUSE. 174 pp. $1.75).

An inquiry into M. Malraux's work is made easier if *The Royal Way* is taken as a starting point: it reveals, I believe, his underlying philosophy in terms not so provocative of controversy as his other books; and having for subject, not the Chinese Revolution, like *The Conquerors* and *Man's Fate*, but a purely imaginative adventure along Conradian lines, it does not raise the question of the proper analysis of historical events. There is the advantage, too, that one of the leading characters seems identifiable with the author. It is, logically, the first of M. Malraux's books, formulating in more general terms the principles he gives particular applications in his other works.

The scene of *The Royal Way* is French Indo-China and Siam; its main characters are Claude, a young French archaeologist, and Perken, a Danish adventurer of long and colorful experience in the East. M. Malraux's own life qualifies him to deal with such persons and such a setting. He is the son of a French official in Indo-China, where he passed his early years, and a short time ago he gained some extra-literary celebrity by giving it out that he had discovered, in an aeroplane flight over Arabia, the original home of the Queen of Sheba. The Royal Way is an ancient road through the jungle, along which Claude hopes to find old temples whose sculptures he can bring back to Europe, both for his own financial good and the good of the science in which he is interested. He secures the help of Perken in his venture. The money side is the only one that interests Perken, who has an ambition concerning the tribes in the unpacified areas which requires the purchase of machine guns for its fulfillment. Perken indeed is devoured by three lusts — love of power, love of women, and love of death; and it is the function of the journey along the Royal Way to symbolize the quest of all three. Ultimately, they merge: these lusts all tend toward things which man feels called upon to conquer; in overcoming them he asserts his individuality against the waywardness and blindness of the universe.

Friendship develops between Perken and Claude, founded on their common interest in death. This interest in death has wider implications. "Daily the affinity that Claude had surmised from the start was growing more apparent; the very tone of Perken's voice confirmed it, his way of saying 'they' when he spoke of the other passengers (and, perhaps, mankind in general), as though by his indifference to claiming any social status he had set himself apart from them." Both Claude and Perken, like Claude's grandfather, have a "loathing for the world in general"; they will not distort their natural insights with the false forms of society. Claude thinks:

> What did they work for, those friends of his, except to cut a figure, to be looked up to? That was their aim, and, for himself, he loathed it. For the childless, godless modern man such truckling to the established order impressed him as an abject surrender to the power of death. So he must forge for himself weapons other than the weapons of the herd; and the surest weapon for one who feels himself cut off from his kind is courage. . . .

> The fixed idea which he had spoken of to Perken, the sense of death's austere dominion, pervaded all his being, persistent as the throb of blood across his temples, imperious as sexual desire. He might be killed, might disappear – it mattered little to him, for he had small interest in his own survival – yet, thus at least, he would have had the fight, if not the victory. But, living, to endure the vanity of life gnawing him like a cancer; all his life long to feel the sweat of death lie clammy on his palm . . . unbearable! Whence, indeed, if not from death, came his fierce desire, dense with the odor of death-ridden flesh, for all that is immortal? What was his quest of the unknown, the slave's brief spell of freedom from his master, that men who do not understand it call adventure – what was it but his counterattack on death?

Naturally enough, "Ah, how he longed to wrench his dreams clear of the inert world that shackled them!" Death represents a satisfaction that the common herd is not capable of experiencing; the romantic poet of earlier generations had the same obsession with physical dissolution, and Shelley in his youth roamed amongst the gravestones at night, armed with pistol and dagger for his own undoing. But death in *The Royal Way* is garnished with a further exoticism in that the scene of its coming is the mysterious Orient, the teeming jungle. The bourgeois dies in his bed, after a lifetime devoted to working for the commonplace satisfactions of home and family; but the man who explores the earth as well as the spirit succumbs to a strange malady or a barbaric weapon in a land beyond the horizon. That is what happens to Perken, who in his death agony gazes at his friend "as if he were a stranger, an intruder from another world".

So it is that man's loneliness is also M. Malraux's theme. Although their pursuit of death brings Claude and Perken together, when the dread event befalls one of them it only serves to emphasize the impenetrable solitude which surrounds man on his journey; and though that journey may seem to be something in which men draw together for attaining a common end, as in this trip through the jungle, the end proves them more than ever distant from one another. Perken's political ambitions—kingship over the jungle tribes—are but a desperate effort to wield power as a compensation for loneliness. Again loneliness follows him into love, so that he is tormented by his inability to experience the emotions and sensations of the woman he possesses. In all these things it is the self that stands foremost, and it is a self whose appetite for *itself* has been unleashed and found to be infinite. In setting himself up against death, and defying it, as it were, by his willing acceptance of it, Perken is affirming his individuality against a force that is impersonal and makes for impersonality; by dictating the terms of his own destruction, he makes the final individual gesture of the self and establishes it as superior to the force before which all men bow. " 'There is . . . no death. There's only . . . I. . . .' One finger contracted on his thigh. 'I who . . . am dying.' "

The hero of *The Conquerors*, Garine, is also ridden by thoughts of death, which he attempts to make less painful through the exercise of power. He is one of the Soviet agents in China, a person of considerable importance as a political organizer and a propagandist during the upheavals attending the general strike in Hong-Kong in 1925. Leon Trotsky has called the book in which Garine appears "a romanticized chronicle of the Chinese revolution" and though M. Malraux has protested that "the principle emphasis is on the relation between individuals and collective action, not on the collective action alone", Trotsky's description seems a just one. The story is narrated by an unnamed "I", a revolutionary worker of some sort, who has long known and admired Garine (M. Malraux also engaged in revolutionary agitation in China). Besides Garine historical personages enter the novel: Borodin, the Russian communist who was political adviser to the Chinese Nationalists, the Soviet General Galen, Chiang Kai-Shek, and doubtless others thinly disguised under fictional names, but none of them is given a detailed portrait, except for Hong, the terrorist, who may or may not have been an actual person. In following the course of a revolution in a country prone to violence (for all its traditional low regard of the military class), M. Malraux must of necessity give a great deal of attention to bloodshed and death, but the interest displayed in the assassin Hong and the character with which Garine is endowed point toward the same obsessions that mark *The Royal Way*.

Perken and Claude are indiscriminate in their hatred of mankind; it is only themselves that they exclude from its opprobrious state. The position of Garine is somewhat less solitary; he seems to have realized the impossibility of passing beyond the human state and centered his hatred on those in human society who embody what he considers to be most objectionable: he hates the bourgeoisie. The earmark of the romantic has always been his hatred of every form of established power and morality; at times he has looked upon them as inescapable concomitants of human nature, and has renounced humanity; at other times he has looked upon them as the work of evil men, and sought to restore more "natural" conditions. Rousseau upheld the latter view believing man botched and degraded from a happier state. Marx carried on the philosophy of Rousseau, making a change in it of great practical usefulness for destructive purposes: he taught that the botched and degraded condition of the masses was the very circumstance from which would arise their happiness. And in the masses the solitary romantic sees the potentialities of the power for which he longs. It is thus with Garine:

> "I do not love mankind. I do not even love the poor, the people, those for who I am going to fight. . . .
>
> "I do prefer them, but merely because they are the conquered. Yes, and because, on the whole, they have more heart, they are more humane than the others; they possess the virtues of the vanquished. . . . One thing is certain, that I utterly detest the middle class into which I was born. But, as for the others, I am well aware that as soon as we have triumphed together, they will become contemptible. . . . All we have in common is our struggle, that is the one thing which is clear."

Although Garine thinks on death as much as Perken, and subscribes to and commits murder on principle, the impersonality of death results for him in a somewhat different code of action. He says: "All Asia is entering on a phase of individualism and discovering death. . . . With the new idea of a death which involves nothing, neither compensation nor atonement, has been born the idea that every man has it in his power to overcome the collective life of suffering and to attain to that individual, independent life, which is in some way regarded as the greatest treasure of the rich." The attitude with which Perken faced death is for Garine the attitude with which life must be faced: "Now I know what Empire is – one tenacious, constant act of violence. To direct, to determine, to constrain. That is life." And he confronts death with an expression of "a hard and yet a fraternal seriousness".

Man's Fate deals with the attempt of the communist members of the Kuomintang (the People's Party founded by Sun Yat-Sen) to seize power in Shanghai in 1927, and the frustration of that attempt by General Chiang Kai-Shek. This novel is more complex in plot and richer in character and detail than *The Conquerors*. The characters are a cosmopolitan lot living in Shanghai, variously Russian, German, French, and Chinese. Kyo Gisors, the hero, has a French father and a Japanese mother. Death again broods over all their actions, and when they have realized that their insurrection is bound to fail it becomes a prime certainty for each of them. Skillfully constructed, the novel moves with speed and intensity and evokes an atmosphere of impending doom in a distant city that does not seem less unfamiliar to the reader for being filled with factories, taxis, and all the appurtenances of industrialized life. In fact, this contrast of East and West makes for an added exoticism, and while it is an effect to which M. Malraux as a novelist is entitled, it must be recognized as an important factor in the total effect of his story; he is a proletarian-minded Pierre Loti. In the same way, his Oriental characters do not think or act very differently from his Occidental ones, and this has the rather paradoxical result of making them seem even more mysterious than the heathen Chinee of popular fiction.

Three of the main characters are not communists – Kyo's father, Baron de Clappique, and Ferral. Of these only Ferral is a more or less typical representative of the capitalist order from the Marxian viewpoint; the first is an opium addict and the second is a buffoon never quite sure of his true personality. Ferral is dominated by the wish to impose his will on others, in which he does not differ from the communist Garine; with Perken he shares his attitude toward sexual experience. But M. Malraux does not attempt to set off his communist and capitalist characters as neat foils against each other; they are, it is true, opposed, but opposed not so much because of the qualities of their character as because they are placed in different systems whose movements pit them one against the other. At first it might seem that this would be too determined and mechanical a situation to allow any really dramatic action. With examples from Greek tragedy in mind (called up by the adulation the novel has received), this is true, for the beginnings of the characters' fate seem not sufficiently a matter of their own souls. But drama on a much lower level it does allow, since within the particular limits dictated by their imposed positions the characters are called upon to act with decision and will: there is a definite goal before them and the reader enjoys excitement and suspense as he watches them achieve, or fail to achieve it. Since the goal involves violent action, there is effective melodrama.

This definite "placing" of the characters also helps to avoid one of the more objectionable features of Marxian fiction: propagandizing in the very obvious form of arguing the merits and necessity of the actions of characters with whom the Marxian author sympathizes. The characters in *Man's Fate* offer no apology for their behavior, nor their author for them: the successful outcome of the revolution is set up as their goal, and the criterion of their actions is one of expediency. It was something of this sort, no doubt, that Mr. Troy had in mind when he spoke of observing, understanding, and recording "the operation in character and conduct of values already present in experience"; for the immediate values of the experience are those of life and death, and the reader who does not pass from the fiction in hand to considerations of philosophy assumes that actions of so violent a nature are based upon some sufficient, if unmentioned, reason. The appeal of M. Malraux's novel to the Marxists derives largely from the fact that he chooses communists for sympathetic characters; there is nothing specifically Marxian in their behavior except in so far as it is romantic. "Malraux's individualism", says Mr. Abel, "consists in weaving into oneself the mechanical actions of a mass man with the necessity to remain distinct and know oneself as such." What this actually means is that M. Malraux shows persons engaged in collective action (the validity of which is not immediately a universal question but a matter of the succession of events in a novel) and at the same time ascribes to them individual feelings which do not prevent them from taking part in it but, nevertheless, have little to do with its ultimate ends.

All this does not deny the characters in *Man's Fate* a philosophy; they have a rudimentary one and just enough of it to provide a basis for their violent action. It is one that they share with Perken and Claude of *The Royal Way*, and it is a philosophy of loneliness. So death for M. Malraux's revolutionaries is the escape from the solitude which even fraternal action cannot provide (though fraternal action is not therefore condemned, since it looks toward a future state which experience cannot test). Ch'en, the assassin, escapes by dealing out death and identifying himself with his victim (after the manner of Ferral in his sexual transports) and in the end carries his mode of life to complete expression by hurling himself with a bomb under Chiang Kai-Shek's automobile. Kyo meets death, as did Perken, asserting his own superiority to it ("to die is passivity, but to kill oneself is action") and happy in the belief that this avowal of his dignity is more than a gesture, for, dying in the revolutionary cause, he brings others to look on death as does he. Katov, faced with the prospect of being burned alive in the firebox of a locomotive, gives to two comrades the cyanide that would have provided him with an easier death, and by this act of generosity overcomes for a brief moment his loneliness.

This problem of loneliness Kassner, the hero of M. Malraux's new book, *Days of Wrath*, meets in very tangible form. An underground communist agitator in Nazi Germany, he is apprehended when he undertakes to save a paper bearing a list of communists from the hands of the police. He is placed in solitary confinement, in complete darkness, for nine days, and is saved from madness only by the messages of comradeship tapped out by a fellow communist, held in some other cell of the prison. He is released because someone has surrendered himself as Kassner, since the real Kassner will be of more value to the party. Still another comrade flies Kassner to Prague, where his wife and child are and where, before finding them, he attends a great anti-fascist meeting. He sees his wife and child and, overwhelmed by a feeling of love for his fellowkind (Party members) knows he must return to Germany to carry on his work.

If we may take Kassner as the repository of M. Malraux's latest conclusions, it appears that his thought in its development has not deviated from the romantic lines laid down in *The Royal Way*. "Malraux's real theme," said Malcolm Cowley, reviewing *Man's Fate*, "is a feeling that most men nurse, secretly, their sense of absolute loneliness and uniqueness, their acknowledgment to themselves of inadequacy in the face of life and helplessness against death – that is what he means by *la condition humaine*; this is man's lot, his destiny, his servitude." Death is too desperate a solution for this servitude, and the writer who goes on advocating it is ridiculous for not practising it; but death, as M. Malraux sees it, is intimately connected with love, and though love of woman only intensifies the consciousness of separateness, love of the oppressed culminates in the fraternal feeling of collective action, which is of that violent nature that allows little thought of the self. It is the unique and personal self, the precious possession of which the final apotheosis is gained in its own destruction, that becomes too terrible to face, just because it is what it was first valued for being. The infinity of singleness is exchanged for the infinity of numbers:

> He opened his eyes again immediately and it seemed to him that he held their eternity in his grasp, an eternity composed of his fellow-prisoners of yesterday, of the child's trusting cheek, of the crowd loyally clinging to its companions in torture, of the face of the pilot in the hurricane, of the man who had given himself up for him, even of his forthcoming return to Germany, the eternity of the living and not the eternity of the dead; it swept everything along with it, and, meeting in the very pulsation of his blood with the only thing in man that was greater than man — the gift of manhood — it beat with great throbs through the once more deserted streets where the wind was beginning to rise. The memory of his acts would be like the memory of his comrades' blood, and the day of his death in Germany this moment would die with him. He suddenly felt that he could not endure to remain motionless: "I feel like walking, like going out with you — anywhere!"

"Every man dreams of being God," said Kyo's father; and Kassner will walk further than Moscow before he finds the place in where every man is God.

The Content of the Novel

Notes Toward a Critique of Fiction

JOHN CROWE RANSOM

A PERSONAL note first. The dogmatical critic who knows his own weakness may like to free himself for the time being of his dogmatism by reproving it in other critics; those who have manifested it gallantly, as he might have said, or shamelessly, as he must say for the sake of his present purpose. In this way and to this worthy end he dissociates himself from those who are spiritually near to him, and even permits himself to appear by open daylight in the camp of their enemies, the uncritical, the Philistine. This is the sort of confession I feel like making when I abuse that hardy group, the Neo-Humanists.

This time it is for the sake of making a slight advance towards a critique of fiction; a thing we do not have in any systematic sense, and need. As for the content of fiction, there are always moral censors standing in its path with prohibitions, or, where it has got beyond them, pursuing it with their cries. They are most intelligent when they are Neo-Humanists. In that case they rely on traditional and classical if insufficient principles; in that case there is involved, indeed, the potent name of Aristotle.

The Neo-Humanists deal with our current fiction, when they condescend to deal at all, in a fashion not cavalier, as I had almost said, but puritanical. One should not be led by that fact into any too sweeping defense of the article, which may be no better than it should be; nor into violence of statement against the Neo-Humanists, who are just what we need them to be. They are as a remnant bloc of Roman senators surviving the Republic and lasting into the second or third generation of the Empire; holding fast to principles which are noble and now rather simple; in their rhetorical technique somewhat repetitive. Fearless, they indict groups and schools as readily as persons; indeed, they do not stop at nations and continents, nor at periods and centuries gone wrong. This would indicate that there is little or nothing of an empirical element in their system. They never appreciate the force of the expansive impulse which drives and dissipates the national mind, and naturally it is their destiny to be jibed at and overridden. But they make it a point to be heard, they never capitulate, they keep alive in every period the critical spirit, and whatever the state of the criticism their honest disaffection with the modern helps to inform it and shape it. Their function is eternal; it is that of the repositories of dying tradition.

Artistically, it is a severely limited interest. A world of calculation is expended upon the technique, the structural method, of fiction by all the competent novelists, by a growing number of critics. But the interest of the moral traditionalists does not extend this far; it is enlisted earlier, and expended fully, when they have noted and probed the subject matter. Thus they have missed the fresher and more innocent part of criticism. And they prove eminently capable of praising a moral fiction whose technical finesse is juvenile; or of condemning an immoral fiction whose technical accomplishment is lovingly exact. The obtuseness of Neo-Humanists with respect to technical effects is like that of story-book puritans with respect to a beautiful woman. They inquire at once about her character and state of grace; saying to themselves that men have been fooled so often, by women who were beautiful but sinful, and even more by women who were beautiful but dumb. They should not forget to remark after all that the woman is beautiful; that is a good deal. There are categories of beauty to be discussed, and techniques of beauty; for beauty is comparatively rare, and probably it is achieved and maintained often with heroic pains. It has the same right to its connoisseurs that moral character has.

Neo-Humanists are Neo-Aristotelians, and their prevailing interest does not do an overwhelming injustice to their master, who was not without his bias; who wrote a *Poetics*, in which he made ingenious analyses and generally subordinated aesthetic to ethic. Now it is hardly customary to make excuses for Aristotle, it may be an impertinence. But I remark that there was no fiction for Aristotle to analyze, there was only drama; and in the field of drama his reading and his audition were necessarily limited, for the thing was young, and only his own race had been experimenting with it. The succeeding European world, playing with drama at various places and at several intense moments, has made it expressive of many interests foreign to its Attic origins, and the simple Aristotelian outlines are nearly lost. What would Aristotle have to say about such plays as *Troilus and Cressida*, the *Beggars' Opera*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Cavalcade*, and now Auden's *The Dog Beneath the Skin*? He would be obliged to say that the range of drama had been greatly extended, and that if it aimed at beauty it must nearly as often as not be the beauty of the *fleurs du mal*.

Though the range of drama had widened by the time that eighteenth-century England was producing it, the novel came into existence as if in protest against its excessive limitations, as if the age demanded an art still looser and more flexible. But perhaps it may be said that in the nineteenth century for a limited period the novel assumes a pattern that conforms distantly to Aristotle's canon for drama. Under Scott and certain Victorians it becomes the account of a hero who is both admirable in character and important in worldly position; whose career is probable and likely rather than possible and strange; into whose situation the reader would be proud to enter, and whose fate (if it could be tragic, though it rarely is) would move him to pity and terror. After this period, unfortunately, the novel takes a second growth, and then later a third growth (the present phase), until it has engendered a multiplicity of uncanonical forms. What is there for the good Aristotelian, who might have thought at one time that the true doctrine had captured fiction, to say about such novels as *Madame Bovary*, *War and Peace*, *The Golden Bowl*, *Ulysses*, *Main Street*, *Remembrance of Things Past*, *Many Marriages*, *Lady into Fox*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Tobacco Road*? We know the sort of thing the best Aristotelians have said.

When does the content of fiction invite discussion from the modern critic? It is that question with which these notes are concerned.

It is when the novel annexes a new province of content that its right to empire is questioned, and its constitutional limits thrown open again to discussion. In the course of time a *de facto* annexation wears familiar, and has to be accepted. I suppose that critics govern themselves secretly by such considerations just as politicians do, and tend to sanction as inevitable those developments that have occurred anyhow, and without benefit of critics. The business of the general critical theorist in any age is to define the patterns which have actually become stable in his art, and rationalize their common aesthetic ground so far as he can. Against that background the novel which would set a new pattern must justify itself; at least its friends must justify it, with the theorist questioning it; and thus the technique of contemporary criticism takes form. For we can hardly call it criticism if it does not base on the general theoretical considerations. There is no art today so alive as fiction, and its experiments are entitled to an attention more acute and more informed than can be furnished by a knockabout journalism.

If we should require the names of a number of novels as the most answerable to Aristotelian rules, the "most elevated in the history of fiction", as the Aristotelian would say, we would find good agreement about the general type and period, and perhaps the list would include *The Heart of Midlothian*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Les Miserables*, *Henry Esmond*, *Romola*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *Moby Dick*. At any rate such a list would be based on demonstrable principles and would be procurable. But even in these novels, whichever they may be, there have been additions made to the rules, and exceptions taken; and since the time of these novels, which will date inevitably back into the previous century, there have come other novels, all but universally loved and approved, which depart even more widely. I wish to name a few of the practices respecting the content of fiction which have won their way in defiance of the restrictions of an Aristotelian aesthetic; or of those which are trying to win their way, being very commonly employed, but still controversial.

The only virtue which can be hoped for a set of notes at an early stage of advancement is that they will offer a fairly comprehensive survey of a field full of problems; a sense of the multitude of the problems and of the sort of relation between them. They are rough, and I shall distinguish them by numerals and headings, as if for blackboard discussion. (This, by the way, was somewhat the tone of Aristotle's presentation of drama.)

1. *The novel has refused to be tightly unified.* It would have lacked most of its occasion for arising as a thing in distinction from drama if it had not meant to escape from the dramatic limitations of time and scene; if it had not meant to multiply its characters and local interests. In drama itself, Shakespeare and the Elizabethans refuted Aristotle; that is, they secured an acceptable degree of unity which did not keep them from developing every character they handled, and every situation, in the light of its own nature, and then also as contributory more or less to the central theme of the play. Outside of drama, the dogmatic remarks of Poe concern, as to verse, the short poem, whose

rules, if they are the only stock the poet has, leave him helpless to compose any extended or major work; and as to prose, the short story, whose rules are entirely inadequate to the novel, even if they are as good as they sound for the short story itself. A concrete material is always indefinitely fertile; human interest is at any moment wayward and tangential, another way of saying the same thing; and modern writers are indulgent. The disunities of modern art are appalling to those nurtured on a classical tradition. Critics cannot help it. The best thing they can do is to relax their dogmas for the kind of performance which is normal, reserving special bouquets for those moderns, perhaps increasing at the moment in number, who design with a stricter logic than usual. Certainly I should wish to be allowed to contribute a small posy to their offering.

2. *The hero need not be important or powerful.* I think he still needs to be sound, the kind of person with whom we readily sympathize; but he need not be royal, noble, rich, or *haut bourgeois.* The Elizabethan drama, insubordinate at so many points, held fast as a rule to the Aristotelian prescript in this respect, so that Shakespeare now has to incur the reproaches of the proletarian writers. But Defoe, Richardson, Smollett, in the novel's first stage, committed it to a democratic principle, and after a little Dickens was counting the extreme application of this principle his virtue. Many persons today may long for the return of an aristocratic society, but they are not entirely sincere if they keep themselves posted in fiction; for then they are constantly exciting their sympathies on behalf of shop girls, working men, rustics, and many plain and humble characters. The creden-

tials of a hero have to do with his internal characteristics, not his external; for Aristotle himself, these are much the more important. The test of the credentials is mostly in whether or not we find him interesting. Interest conditions sympathy, which is the presupposition of all fiction as a communicated art. It may be that the modern mind has grown dangerously suggestible, so that its sympathy is so quick as almost to oust any private character and fixed tastes. In this development fiction may be a cause as well as an effect, but the thing is much too far gone now for legislation by critical authorities. (The outright legislative capacity of criticism is very small.) The name of the movement which brought low life into fiction, petitioning for readers' sympathy, is realism. To extreme realism there used to oppose itself romanticism, at an equal extreme; but so easy was the triumphant march of realism that it ceased to sound its trumpets, to wave its standard, and this pair of terms is rarely agitated by critics of fiction now.

3. *The matter of fiction may be straight aesthetic as well as moral or heroic.* To Aristotle a drama (and to the Aristotelians a novel) is the exhibit of a character agonizing over a moral problem. But he observes that, conventionally, other elements enter into this definition; among them, the exhibit is rendered in good meter, with poetic devices. He does not show the nature or tendency of that aesthetic content which is the contribution of the poetry alone; he seems to remark on the poetry as merely a good vehicle, a device for conveying the fixed content which is moral. Therefore he does not raise the critical question which is central for the moderns: What is that content which

is aesthetic, as distinguished from the moral or the practical?

In discussions of poetry Mr. T. S. Eliot and many others talk about sensibility; for them the *sensibilia*, innocent, diffuse, irresponsible, attending the strict agonies of thought, would seem to compose this content. But poetic definition is very baffling. Much easier do we find it to isolate the aesthetic effect in fiction. There are novels very largely devoted to sensible content strung on the most perfunctory thread of narrative, all but divorced from moral content; extended passages of this sort in very many novels. Technically, of course, they get into the novel by being part of the mind of the character, when the action of the mind of the character is the specific content of the novel; for this action may be only the flowing of the sensory items. If this is not important, and immensely relished by the reader, who perhaps is not such an activist by nature as by painful conditioning, I cannot understand the excitement provoked by such books as Elizabeth Roberts's *The Time of Man*, or Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, or even by Henry James's *The Ambassadors*; though in the last-named work the subject may be said to be, precisely, the competition between the aesthetic and the moral interests, and their possible felicitous reconciliation, or else the tragic breach between them in the mind of a puritan.

The women novelists excel, I believe, in the proportion of aesthetic content they can carry in a narrative that has ordinary moral or intellectual content. The regional novel, on the whole, defines itself as the attempt to combine a traditional and fairly predictable pattern of conduct, one that requires a minimum of attention, with the exhibition of a locale whose contemplation by the fortunate natives is an extended and expert lyrical experience; a combination that is impressive if nowadays the region can be really found, and does not have to be manufactured. But this comparatively pure aesthetic content, now so much at home in the novel, is a matter about which Neo-Humanists as I judge have informed themselves but rarely, and cannot have received any leading from Aristotle. I warn them that it exists.

(I do not suggest that aesthetic interest cannot rise within the moral situations themselves. If it does not, the work is not a work of art. If the characters are free and private personalities, and the situations concrete, the expansive sensibility begins to operate and the moral situation, and the tortured characters in it, begin to suffer a sea-change; partly in the text, and partly in the mind of the assisting reader. In other words the work is a work of imagination.)

4. *The content need not be tragic.* A part of the content, a large proportion of it as we have just seen, may consist in a succession of independent aesthetic or sensory experiences. A part of it, perhaps the whole of it, may consist in practical action and thought, with aesthetic interest accruing to it unsought and almost unperceived. The aesthetic interest does not depend on the issue of the plot. The tone may be humorous if it likes, which is something stronger than pleasant; humor is much more a modern product than a classical. It certainly is not hindered from being tragic if that is what it likes; and then it wins the approbation of Aristotelians. It is really in an important sense a superior product in that event, for it takes a strong

intelligence to appreciate a tragic action. It may be hard for many moderns to imagine a working dramatic relation between man and God, when they have only heard of such a relation between man and man. That is because the modern imagination is poverty-stricken when we compare it with the Greek. Tragedy to the Greeks meant the lack of coincidence between the human order and the world-order or God-order, and therefore the essential failure of human ambitions.

In these days we have been educated away from such notions, and their attendant mythology. Perhaps we do not need the mythology but we could use the sense of the thing. It is greatly to the credit of our artists that occasionally, even under their modern conditioning, they can show man defeated, and defeated not by enemies in human society but by nature, and not by nature as inertia and unconscious force but by nature as intelligent if inscrutable agent; by nature as Nature, or as God, or as Devil. The author of *Moby Dick* was such an artist. There are others, but they are not the rule. We are obliged to say that it is not at all necessary for the novel to be tragic in the Greek manner in order for the novel to have artistic value; but it is welcome to do so if it likes, and then its value would seem very high.

5. *The matter of fiction is often transparent but it is not then at its best.* I suppose that Aristotle's real reason for subordinating Greek comedy, which was burlesque and caricature, was his feeling that it handled its material less objectively than it should, and less as an end in itself. The moral and instrumental terms which he was using did not permit him to say this. In the satirical comedy the author is scoring a

point of conduct, and it is his intention to leave the spectator not so much with an image as with a generalization and a taboo. Greek comedy is practical, though in a negative sense, where Greek tragedy is contemplative and wholly sympathetic. At any rate it seems sound enough if aesthetic lays down the law that in art the concrete matter is the thing; not the application we are invited to make of it, for then the matter becomes only an instrument and we are in the realm of homiletic. There is a danger even in "high seriousness": the moral considerations may scare the aesthetic effects, which are shy.

The transparency of the fictional content is perfect in allegory, where we are instructed to translate every character and every situation immediately into stock generalizations; thus Christian, and Mr. Busyman, and the slough of despond, and the sower who went forth to sow. The intention of fiction at this stage is to furnish a system of useful moral mnemonics. But above the allegorical level, which is childish in mental age, there is a great deal of thinly disguised propaedeutic fiction, whose reader is invited to proceed to a given generalization without being explicitly instructed. This is the fiction of propaganda. It may be popular, but its interest is abstract and intellectual; utilitarian fiction. The proletarian writers are the most famous offenders at the moment. There have been a few replies in kind made by the bourgeois writers which are no better; as rebuttals they are even more obviously in the terms of dialectic. This fiction certainly exists, and in great volume. I do not see how we can deny it the name, but we may qualify the name by adding, *With transparent content*, to distinguish it from the pure article; it does not offer the true illusion of an imaginative fiction.

There are still subtler varieties. In satire we find a content which has to be construed in a sense opposite to that which is indicated. The hero is a knave and the wise man is a fool, in spite of the author's recommendation. The author is having his fun but he is more serious than he seems; he is instructing us by indirection; he is a rhetorician. There are many degrees of finesse in satire. But fiction is so universal an art that the illumination must not be withheld too long, nor the realization that the content is a transparent though refracting medium of truth. Sinclair Lewis is rather forthright to play this game; he mixes direct and indirect persuasion. But there is greater consistency in Forster and May Sinclair and Norman Douglas; in David Garnett; in Cabell.

Finally, under the head of transparency of content, but above satire in subtlety, is the fiction of irony, in which the lessons are not so pointed, yet the author views his characters as slightly ridiculous, and in the name of philosophic wisdom withholds complete sympathy; turns them inside out and drops them. It is possible theoretically to be too wise to commit oneself imaginatively to any "probable" character. It is also almost fatal, this degree of wisdom; and enormously disquieting to the reader. I shall approach this topic presently under another heading.

6. *It is still necessary to except from the fictional content the obscene.* But for fiction the obscene is necessarily a vanishing quantity. The kind of action permitted is evidently subject to a constant extension. Probably it is permissible to insist on the distinction

between what is proper for the novel and what is proper for the stage or the moving-picture, on the ground that the former art is for private consumption and the latter arts are for public occasions. But in defending the novel we must not betray her sisters; for example, we must remark for their benefit that we stultify ourselves if we insist that nothing shall be presented by stage or film which is not suitable for the young; shall we reduce our artistic life to the level of adolescents? In the novel the subject matter is frequently very intimate, very private. But does obscenity consist in the revelation of some given degree of intimacy? Neither an empirical aesthetic nor an *a priori* one will be able easily to establish the connection; only some traditional one, where the rules are accepted uncritically and by rote. Philosophical considerations suggest that it is not the degree of intimacy that counts; it is not any external content; it is the internal content or attitude.

It is naturalism which is obscene. Not naturalism as it may be practised under some loose understanding of the cult, by Zola or by Dreiser, but naturalism in the strict meaning of the term, as we find it at least occasionally in these authors. (The very bad English which Dreiser occasionally writes is obscene, if we care to strain the use of the word; the fact that he cannot aestheticize his language, that he uses it grossly, is against him; whereas a writer of beautiful English cannot be wholly or mainly obscene.) Naturalism is the observation of man's animalism. It views him as another species for the biological sciences to handle, as a creature with instincts or appetites, and a behavior of pursuit and satisfaction. It inclines to view his little decencies and formalities as camouflage, and not of the creature's essence; likes to get beneath the skin and expose man in his uncensored animal freedom as a natural being. This is a stern application of the well-known scientific zeal for truth, if it were only, to our certain knowledge, just. The possibility of the arts depends on the possibility that it is not just.

If man has an aesthetic experience – man as reader following an account which subtly determines his manner of registration, or before that man as a character in the story – then he is not an animal. The complication of the animal or instinctive act with sensibility removes him from the animal kingdom and removes fiction from the realm of natural science. It is when this complication is absent that fiction is obscene.

One of the hardest test cases, I think, is *A Farewell to Arms*. This strange book is evidently a *tour de force*, in which the author is trying to see whether he cannot make beautiful flowers grow out of a very flagrant dunghill. The affair of the lovers becomes a romance – paragon of aesthetic experiences – or it does not; I cannot be sure. But its content is war and women; or war and one woman, who replaces all other women for a period of nine or ten months; the question being largely whether she is just generic woman, biological woman, or an individual woman. The ritual of courtship and love is a cunning device meant to secure the humanism of man against the urgency of his animalism. A little of this ritual goes along with man even when he is playing truant, when he is *en vacances*; but not much; not much in the *Farewell*; and if the truth were told one suspects that it could not have much consequence in determining the kind of affairs that are going to take place.

7. *The exhibit of futility as the content is the beginning of the end of fiction.* This content is a fairly recent innovation in fiction; it is older in verse, though it has been fairly exceptional there. It was uttered in the wisdom literature of the Hebrews, and *Ecclesiastes*, a great locus for it, was welcomed by the hospitable canon into that Book which is our principal literary inheritance. It forms perhaps a desirable occasional content. Today it is common both in verse and in fiction, and exists in such volume as to have induced in Mr. Krutch a thorough-going pessimism as to the future not merely of art but of civilization. Where does the sense of futility enter the mind of the observer of human conduct, the potential novelist? Sometimes I judge it is simply the extreme limit of a progressive satirical habit. The satirist exposes so many forms of behavior to ridicule that finally he is ready to expose them all. Then he satirizes the race, the species itself, all is vanity. This is the end feared by Plato when he questioned whether Greek comedy was a safe thing for young Greek gentlemen to patronize; nearly realized by Auden in his *The Dog Beneath the Skin.*

But I have in mind a slightly different and perhaps more serious manifestation; one that is independent of cynicism (which means doggishness). It occurs in sincere poetry and prose, where the characters are admirable and yet know their own futility, and where author and reader enter the characters sympathetically and know this futility with them. This is evidently a dangerous stage for literature to reach. In saying dangerous I associate myself with Plato and Aristotle, if they could speak to the point, and by all means with the Neo-Humanists, who understand it and analyze it ably enough. I even associate myself in this respect with the proletarian writers, such as Mr. Edmund Wilson, whose revolutionary proposal takes off in part from their apprehension that our literature is at the stage of incipient locomotor ataxia, for precisely this reason. I would hold back from joining either of them with respect to the actions which they would have us take to escape it; the cultivation of self-repression, which the Neo-Humanists recommend; the inauguration of a brand-new society, the thing proposed by the proletarians, in which human beings might start all over, and be something like the infant of Wordsworth's visions. We cannot cancel history, escape from our own past; neither the individual nor society can do that successfully. But these are generous advices which they offer.

The actual exhibit of futility is at many degrees of malignancy. Sinclair Lewis has had a rather spotty career, with novels that sometimes are satirical and sometimes are sincere. His *Main Street* started a flood of novels which are uncertain whether to stigmatize the lives of the typical Americans because they do not realize the best patterns extant, or to enter these lives honestly and seek mournfully but vainly up and down the earth after patterns which are not now to be found. The more intelligent the lives, the less able they are to commit themselves to objectives under which they might hope to stop being self-conscious and to attain sublimation and meaning. This is the precise ground for Mr. Krutch's pessimism. The subject of fiction now becomes the quest of happiness, or the quest of a meaning for life; very different from the former subject, which was the manner in which the hero succeeded or failed in his whole-hearted quest of some perfectly conventional objective. If I must cite a few of the novelists of futility, without trying to distinguish the partial or thorough-going forms under which it appears with them, I should have to mention: Tolstoy, D. H. Lawrence, Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather, David Garnett, James Joyce, and William Faulkner.

Peace to the Neo-Humanists. Is it not possible to discuss the arts without employing the cathedral tone? Or to take as conservative a position as one dares – in the light of what the arts actually are – without bothering about whether we are treading on the sacred toes of Aristotle? I am not sure whether it is possible for me.

REVIEWS

Disinfected Capitalism*

MR. CHILDS's enthusiastic discussion of the cooperative movement in Sweden and neighboring Scandinavian countries has, during the past few months, achieved an explicable success; for it offers, with a fair amount of supporting evidence, a working model of modern industrial capitalism with some of its worst excesses removed. In Sweden (from which Mr. Childs draws most of his specific data) a fifth of the population, both rural and urban, belongs to consumer's cooperatives, satisfying most of their material wants at cooperative stores. Something like half of the utilities are owned or directly controlled by the State. The major export industries (mining, lumber, and dairy products) upon which the country is dependent for its present economic arrangements, are largely formed into producers' cooperatives with a strong measure of State control. In general, the average Swede is reasonably certain of not being overcharged for his goods, reasonably certain of marketing his product, and reasonably assured of care in his old age. But that is all: and to call this system of disinfected capitalism a "Middle Way", as Mr. Childs does in his subtitle, is likely to rouse hopes which have little moral basis.

To Mr. Childs — and to the reviewers who have praised the book – this "Middle Way" is a working compromise between capitalism and collectivism. To most readers of The American Review, it will seem a harmless but superficial means of delaying the process by which the one becomes the other. For both capitalism and collectivism have as their prime objective the effective distribution of goods; and if Sweden's compromise between the two displays greater efficiency than either has displayed thus far, it does not touch the basic problem of our time: the problem which is stirring the peoples of the Western world as they have not been stirred for four centuries: the problem which is concerned with goods only incidentally, and whose chief concern is with liberty, the moral relationship of man to man. To give men stronger assurance of a steady supply of goods, as both the Swedish and (on a lower material level) the Russian systems offer, is indeed admirable as far as it goes. But unless in the process such a system can slake the consuming thirst of modern man to recapture his lost liberties, to cast off the slave relationship which both industrial capitalism and communism place upon him: unless, in short, he can regain economic liberty through the personal repossession of productive property, the end of our Dark Ages is not in sight. And to confuse goods with property – to believe that greater ease in satisfying material wants can for long quiet man's consuming desire to reestablish his moral independence, is merely to becloud the issue.

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* SWEDEN: THE MIDDLE WAY *by Marquis W. Childs* (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS. 171 pp. $2.50).

This confusion between goods and property – between material satisfaction and moral satisfaction – may be seen in its inception, if the reader will pardon an apparent digression, in the use which writers of Mr. Childs's school make of the anomalous term "profit motive". The Swedish system, in Mr. Childs's view, tends to "remove the profit motive" from Swedish production. Yet the reason for thus "removing the profit motive" is merely to be able to offer goods at lower prices to the consumer, so that essentially the motive remains the same. There is no moral distinction between the man who, as producer, wishes to make more profits (in order ultimately to have more goods), and the man who, as consumer, wishes to have lower prices (also in order to have more goods). In both cases, within the terms of this discussion, the concern is with material goods alone, and not with the moral relationships among the men who produce them.

All of this is not to say that *Sweden: The Middle Way* is not an illuminating and informative book, written with sincerity and a long-standing interest in the subject (Mr. Childs's *Sweden: Where Capitalism is Controlled* – a John Day Pamphlet – was reviewed in this magazine two years ago). And it is easy to appreciate how consumers' cooperatives, by creating an assured market, can attract a certain number of limited-profit producers and to some degree stabilize the industrial productive process. But there is a danger that, charmed by sweet phrases, we shall come to expect far too much of this industrial capitalism with its sharpest teeth removed; and, lulled by the promise of a temporary material security (even the Swedes, who export their butter and put margarine on their bread, are pitifully dependent for their present relative comfort upon the whole uncertain complex of international trade), will forget that modern man is wracked with an illness that can be cured not by giving him more goods more regularly, but only by giving him what goods he gets on terms of responsible ownership of the means of production and consequent moral independence.

MARVIN MCCORD LOWES

Bolshevism and National Socialism*

FOUR years ago, in a masterful study which is still the best work on the subject, Dr. Waldemar Gurian laid bare the very soul of Bolshevism. He stripped it down to its naked essentials and told us, far better and more discerningly than any other writer has told us, what in reality it is: the atheist Marxian word made flesh: the heresy of the deification of socialist society, victorious in the former empire of the Czars and armed for world power. It was a clear and convincing analysis, and now, in a new book, I fear he has introduced confusion; for this recent essay is an elaboration of the now commonly heard thesis that Bolshevism is also National Socialism.

Dr. Gurian presents indeed a very platonic conception of Bolshevism as a sort of disembodied satanic power which exploits various ideologies and various social crises in its effort to render itself concrete in human life. Hence that which gained the mastery of Russia is fundamentally identical with the thing now ruling Germany; and Bolshevism is not Marxian Communism, nor even determined in its nature by the ideology of Marxism, but rather has its essential manifestation in the absolutism of the totalitarian state.

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* THE FUTURE OF BOLSHEVISM *by Waldemar Gurian* (SHEED & WARD. 128 pp. $1.50).

> It is perfectly possible [says Dr. Gurian] to divorce the Marxianism [*sic*] ideology from Bolshevism. For that ideology is no more of its essence than are the distinctive factors of Russian history. It is merely utilized as the premises of its propaganda. What then is the essence of Bolshevism? We shall find that it is in the central position assigned to the politico-social order. That is to say, the political and social order is the center round which human existence revolves. It is the standpoint from which all other departments of human life are viewed and valued. It annexes all other forces as its dependents. Their importance is in every case measured by their services to the political and social order.

The substance of Dr. Gurian's thesis may be summed up in this way: Processes of social and intellectual disintegration in Russia and Germany opened the way for political groups, disciplined and bent upon full absolutist rule, to obtain complete mastery of the whole apparatus of public power, which they utilize to the supreme end of maintaining themselves in authority; and this is the essence of Bolshevism. In Russia the Marxian ideology was exploited, hence Bolshevism there appeared red; but in Germany it exploited another ideology (at once simpler and more vague), and took on the color of brown. Profoundly different, of course, are these ideologies, and bitter is the hostility between their respective proponents; but this fact must not blind us to the essential identity of the Russian and German phenomena. Both are Bolshevism, as that thing is here defined, for, to quote Dr. Gurian:

the official creed must not be regarded as the belief in particular ideas but as the sanction which justifies the formation of a small and compact party and its mobilization of the masses. Its doctrines must therefore be understood as nothing more than comprehensive watchwords effective as propaganda. The function of the ideology is to serve as the basis and bulwark of the party's omnipotence, the link which connects it with the masses, with the people, and its justification for bringing every sphere of life under its influence.

Of the two forms of the one thing, Dr. Gurian argues very forcefully that the German is by far the more formidable threat to the Western world, because it has freed itself from the stale and outworn doctrines of nineteenth-century Marxism and even succeeded in identifying itself with tradition. Therefore, to the extent that the West succumbs to Bolshevism, it is after the model of the German form that the evil thing will be particularized.

Now an adequate criticism of this thesis would require a considerable excursion into metaphysics, for Dr. Gurian conceives Bolshevism as a "spiritual force" existing, it would seem, independently of men and striving to bring them under its dominion. It may be so, but all that we as human beings can actually witness is men acting in accordance with particular motives and ideas. We can see the masters of Soviet Russia governing and forming generations of human beings after a certain fashion and according to a certain vision of reality; in Germany we see the same thing done after another fashion and according to another vision of reality. Without doubt there is a very striking similarity between the methods employed (and the tracing out of that likeness is one of the high merits of Dr. Gurian's book), but there is a world of difference in the results; for humankind is being cast from two very different molds; which molds are shaped by the opposing ideologies. And when one bears in mind that these latter supply the principles informing the educative process through which are passed the new human beings brought to life in these lands, it is not only difficult to accept Dr. Gurian's slighting of the significance of the ideologies, but quite impossible (for me at least) to discern any *essential* common denominator in the Soviet Republic and the Third Reich. Whatever the future may hold in store for these two political communities, one thing is certain: it will be determined by the oncoming generations, to whom it will belong. The Russians have taken one poison, the Germans another; but poisons are not all the same, nor are they all fatal; and although the poison imbibed by the Germans today may be producing serious illness, it is not without certain strong antidotes. National Socialism may conceivably lead to a human order in which the fevered madness of recent years will pass away, but Russian Communism evinces no such possibility; wherefore does it seem a false interpretation to reduce these two things to one.

Dr. Gurian is of course entirely right in seeing the menace of totalitarian-state absolutism pressing hard upon the liberal and once-Christian society of the West, for that society is in spiritual dissolution. And he is equally right in asserting that events are likely to move along German rather than Russian lines. But to make this all of a piece – to see but one heresy where there are really two – that is not a convincing thesis. Time may render it so, but the signs are still to the contrary.

ROSS J. S. HOFFMAN

Rousselot in English*

MORE than a quarter of a century ago this book first appeared in France. Its author was a young Jesuit professor of theology. His life-story is briefly told. Born at Nantes at the end of 1878, at sixteen he entered the novitiate of the French Jesuits, then in exile at Canterbury in England. At the age of thirty-one he was appointed to a theological chair at the *Institut Catholique* in Paris. Four years later he was called to the army. He fell in battle at the Eparges on September 25th, 1915, and was buried on the field. No man knows the exact resting-place of the body of Sergeant Pierre Rousselot.

He signalized his appointment to the Paris chair of theology by the publication of this book. After his death a second edition was brought out under the editorship of his colleague, Léonce de Grandmaison, who wrote for the edition a prefatory essay that was at once biographical and apologetical. For many years the book has been the despair of aspiring translators, for Rousselot "made rather free use of his own language to suit his purposes". The translator of this English edition of Rousselot's well-known work is a Louvain *agrégé en philosophie*, James E. O'Mahony, of University College, Cork, Ireland, who is himself the author of a neo-Scholastic study in Thomist theodicy (*The Desire of God*). Dr. O'Mahony is to be congratulated for his excellent translation.

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* THE INTELLECTUALISM OF ST. THOMAS *by Pierre Rousselot, translated by James E. O'Mahony* (SHEED & WARD. 231 pp. $2.50).

In his foreword the translator expresses the opinion that Rousselot would probably have modified certain positions of his if he had lived. This view is borne out by P. de Grandmaison's introduction to the second French edition, a worthy contribution to the Rousselot theme which might profitably have been included in this presentation of *L'Intellectualisme de St. Thomas* to English and American readers. It might be inferred, therefore, that Rousselot's work is in somewhat of an unfinished condition. That may be true in certain details. But Dr. O'Mahony emphasizes the importance of a metaphysic of intelligence, such as is found in the writings of Aquinas, at the present hour:

> The growth of interest in theories of intelligence, which is the outstanding thing in recent psychology, must ultimately whet the appetite of our contemporaries for a metaphysical theory of it. The Thomistic theory of Intelligence is as actual as his metaphysical account of Being.

The book falls into three parts. In the first part Rousselot discusses what he conceives to be the teaching of Aquinas on the intellectual process as such, that is to say, the intellectual process unhampered by sensible qualities or by any of the material elements that are to be found in the ordinary conditions of human knowing. The second part treats of the ordinary instruments of human speculation and is, in fact, a brief tract on Thomistic epistemology. The third part is concerned with the practical value of intelligence as applied to human action; it deals with the metaphysical presuppositions of ethics, as Rousselot sees them in the works of Aquinas. At the end of the book there is an appendix wherein the function of intelligence in social and political philosophy is briefly outlined.

Rousselot defines intellectualism as the philosophical teaching which places the supreme value and intensity of life in an act of intellect, which sees in this act the radical and essential good, and which regards all other things as good only in so far as they participate in this act. He then formulates the position of Aquinas as follows: "Intelligence, for St. Thomas, is the faculty of the real, but it is the faculty of the real only because it is the faculty of the divine."

It is to be noted that this principle is twofold. Taking his standpoint thereon, Rousselot frankly declares himself the foe of contemporary thought. Intelligence is the faculty of the real. But "the idea that intellect essentially deforms and mutilates reality, that it is the faculty of the unreal, is today so widespread that it has found its way into current literature and conversation".

In explanation of his charge that contemporary thought looks upon intelligence as the faculty of the unreal, Rousselot goes on to say that modern philosophy denounces Scholasticism as the philosophy of abstractions, a system of thought which breaks up the real into small fragments and substitutes those fragments for the ineffable unity of the data of experience. It is charged that Scholasticism, since it is petrified in the rigidity of rational categories, practically denies the changing reality of experience. Refractory to the pure impression of the data of experience, the traditional philosophy is said to be alienated from the true spirit of historical method. As Rousselot interprets the modern view, "the world of mind fashioned by Scholastics in the likeness of their own intellects is seen at once to be devoid of reality and stability, a kind of intellectual china-shop".

In stating the objection so strongly Rousselot has by no means finished with the problem. Intelligence is for him the faculty of the real just because it is the faculty of the divine. "Scholasticism is above all the rationalization of the divine." Here he discovers new adversaries, who protest no longer in the name of philosophy but in the name of religion. They object, he says, to the teaching that would make the approach to God by a process of reasoning rather than by way of an intimate experience. It is no longer faith, but thought, which is the organ of approach to the Most High. In their belief, as Rousselot understands it, "intellectually and morally St. Thomas has fallen back into the Greek mentality, and with that the Christian spirit has entirely disappeared, for Christianity stands for a spiritual Personality at the summit of things and not merely for an Idea".

Rousselot's method of meeting this objection discloses for the reader the very essence of his theory of Thomistic intellectualism, a theory, by the way, which has been violently assailed in some of its features by many of his neo-Scholastic contemporaries. He points out that Aquinas discovers no opposition between Idea and spiritual Personality. "It is, in fact, the fundamental principle of his metaphysical intellectualism that every spiritual Person is an Idea, and that there is perfect identity between Idea and spiritual Reality."

And then we come to this striking pronouncement which, in all essential elements, is a statement of the Rousselot thesis:

> Intelligibility is something that belongs essentially to living and substantial beings. To know is primarily and principally to seize within the self a non-self which in its turn is capable of seizing and embracing the self; it is to live with the life of another. Intelligence is the faculty of the divine because in this way it is capable of embracing God; and if we are to have a correct idea of it we must grasp the fact that *the function of intelligence is not to fabricate concepts or adjust its propositions but to enrich itself with realities.*

The phrase I have italicized is the key to the entire book. It is the intellect that grasps Being as it is in itself, and the highest ideal of intellectual knowledge is achieved when the Reality known by me is identically the Idea I have of it; this immediacy is found, according to Aquinas, in two cases only, namely, in actual intuitions of itself by the ego on the one hand, and in what Catholic theologians call the beatific vision on the other.

It would seem, then, that a direct intuition of reality is the highest and most perfect form of knowledge. This, indeed, is what Rousselot holds to be the teaching of Aquinas. He tells us that the natural substitutes for the intellectul process in its purity are the concept, the apprehension of the particular, science, system, and symbol. Human intellection represents on a lower plane, he says, the functioning of a being which, despite everything, is mind. He describes the process of human understanding as an attempt "on the part of an intelligence bound up with sense to find a substitute for pure ideas in its effort to feign a direct intuition of reality". He sees the abstract concept as an unconscious imitation of the intuitive mode of knowledge. "It is an artifice on the part of man to impart to material things, by a purification of sensible data, the appearance of spiritual Realities."

The intellectualism of St. Thomas falls, therefore, into two categories. There is, first, intellection as such, which is essentially the acquisition of reality and not merely a process of forging propositions. Then there is the operation of intelligence as it is found in man and subject to human conditions. Rousselot claims that Aquinas, with his ideas of the ideal purity of the intellectual process, could not exalt human intelligence as the best and highest that could be found in the universe.

Far from pretending to force the whole of reality into that rigid mould imposed by extended substance (the proper object of intellect on earth) on our human mode of knowledge, the metaphysic of St. Thomas, on the contrary, stands out amongst all the Scholastic systems for its affirmation of realities that lie outside this mould. He affirms the existence of pure forms where the multiplication of essence and individuality, because they are above and beyond space, go hand in hand.

The popular idea today regards the intellectual process as an epiphenomenon on the surface of life. Aquinas would not have subscribed to such a view. Like Aristotle, he looked upon intelligence as the life-process *par excellence* and saw in it the deepest and most intense activity of intellectual beings. Neither would he have accepted the modern evaluation of intelligence as something necessarily egocentric, for he made human intellect a "faculty of otherness" which emancipates men from mere subjectivity.

Immanence and exteriorization were, for St. Thomas, the two dominant characteristics in human intelligence. Of these two it is immanence which, in the last analysis, imparts to the intellectual act its perfection. Exteriorization is our human handicap. Immanence belongs to intelligence as such. In classifying the different degrees of intelligence activity Aquinas always assigns the lowest place to those forms which are most dependent on what comes from without. Complete immanence, he holds, is to be found only in the supreme Reality. "Radically complete immanence is to be found in Him Whose being is identical with intelligence and idea, that Mind, namely, which is the measure of the truth of things."

But if there is identity of being and intelligence and idea in the Supreme Intelligence, there is multiplicity in the human intelligence. There are the external senses and also the internal senses, the latter including the *sensus communis*, sense-memory, and the *sensus cogitativus*. There is also the distinction which St. Thomas makes between *intellectus* and *ratio*, intellect and reason. Rousselot gives us a number of texts in order to drive home to the reader the composite imperfection of human knowledge as well as the sensible origin of ideas, all of which is a constituent part of the Thomistic theory of knowledge. But he goes further, and emphasizes the fact that there is an imperfection in human knowledge due to the discursive method, reminding us that:

It is in intuitive knowledge that St. Thomas seeks the ideal and measure of all intellectual activity. And it is this very distinction which we have been emphasizing which allows him to "Platonize" when he takes the whole universe into consideration while remaining very much Aristotelian in his explanation of the sublunary world.

Readers will find a special interest attaching to Rousselot's discussion of the scholastic definition of truth as being *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, an equation of the thing and the mind. Arguing that the typical intellectual operation is a vital grasp of reality, he asserts that perfect truth does not consist in the stable union of two concepts but in "an assimilation and union of mind with things". He goes on to say that the truth to be ascribed to any particular object of intellectual knowledge is not something unique and static. "So little is true knowledge indivisible that it varies necessarily with the nature of the thinking subject." The thinking mind is alive. It is also finite. So then we have this stimulating statement of Thomistic epistemology:

> If a being is progressive, then, according to St. Thomas, there cannot be an idea corresponding to it which would be arresting and completely definitive; if a being is finite, there can be nothing exhaustive about its corresponding concept. The indivisible *equality* of true ideas among themselves and in their relations with things is as foreign to him as the idea of the primacy of discursive reasoning.

In other words, the Thomistic intellectualism is not content with any theory of the universal explanation of things. It refuses to maintain a rigid duality of the two terms intellect and object-of-intellect, for it finds that any such theory fails to solve the question whether reality which is intelligible for mind is radically finalized in regard to mind. "It is equivalent to arresting the movement of thought at the judgement and concept stage and to allowing or postulating something more ultimate than knowledge in the form of action and such like." Against this interpretation of the *adaequatio rei et intellectus* principle Rousselot presents St. Thomas as insisting that the highest form of activity consists in the intellectual acquisition of reality, which in its turn must be distinguished from judgements of fact regarding such and such qualities.

> [To affirm this] is to suppose, if finality be admitted, that everything which possesses reality is also *eo ipso intelligibile*, and further that nothing has a title to reality except in function of intelligibility and as object of, or preparation for, intellectual knowledge according to the varying capacities of intelligent beings. Mind comes first, and all being is for mind.

If this excerpt seems to possess a Platonist flavor Rousselot makes no apologies. Proceeding to discuss the existence of real incorporeal substances intelligible for mind alone, he comes to the Catholic idea of personal angels capable of knowing and willing. He tells us that those beings, considered as subsisting as intelligible objects and as subjects endowed with purely intuitive intelligences, are constantly before the mind of Aquinas and that there is no understanding his theory of universals unless his doctrine of the angels has been properly grasped. From this the author makes the deduction:

> If it was characteristic of Plato at his best to have transcended the viewpoint of a philosophy of concepts and to

have affirmed the existence of intelligible objects to the contemplation of which the human mind looks for happiness, then it must certainly be admitted that no philosopher has more intimately or vitally incorporated Platonism into his synthesis than St. Thomas.

The limits of space debar me from further quotation from this brilliant book. But the reader is advised that every page is stimulating, especially in the section which discusses how Aquinas linked his entire system of rational psychology with the Aristotelian philosophy of ethics. The intimate blending of elements from both Plato and Aristotle which is found by historians of philosophy to characterize the great work of Aquinas is abundantly illustrated in Rousselot's work. With Dr. O'Mahony's expert translation, English and American students are introduced to a great modern contribution to the classical tradition of philosophy.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

Humor of the South*

WHAT is Southern humor? Even among students who are busily exploring Americana, hardly the beginning of an answer to that question has emerged. In her *American Humor*, the one critical work that has attempted to survey the native field, Constance Rourke does not even ask the question. She sidles away from the matter of sectional differentiations and goes on a determined search for American types. One type, the Yankee, must perforce be admitted as a sectional type. Beyond that, she finds only racial types – Negro, Jew, Irish – and then she proceeds to generalizations about frontier humor and to applications that have something to do with the American character as it emerges in Poe, Whitman, Sinclair Lewis, even Dreiser and James – all of them humorists.

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* HUMOR OF THE OLD DEEP SOUTH *by Arthur Palmer Hudson* (MACMILLAN. 572 pp. $5.00).

Miss Rourke devotes only two pages to the material which forms the center of Mr. Arthur Palmer Hudson's new collection, *Humor of the Old Deep South*. Just two pages, aside from sundry passing references, for the great "contagion of laughter" (in Mr. Hudson's phrase) which swept the Southwestern states from the 1830's to the 1860's and has never really died out. Of Sut Lovingood and Major Jones, of Baldwin's *Flush Times* and Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* she has little to say: their humor was "coarse-grained" and though once " enormously popular" it has now "worn thin". I do not know what can have led so excellent a critic into such a false sense of proportion unless it is the lamentable obsession which haunts many of our critics. They feel under obligation to produce a national American character, and, not finding it, take refuge in careful understatements. And then, too, their preoccupations are often too literary. It is particularly true of professional folklorists, I regret to say, that the thing they are discussing is not integral in their experience. They know *about* it, without ever having really lived it.

Mr. Hudson, editor and compiler of *Humor of the Old Deep South*, suffers from neither of these handicaps. He is not trying to chase a general theory to its lair; he is merely garnering up, in one of the most valuable and delightful miscellanies published in our time, the items of the humorous tradition (I hope the word tradition will be permitted) of a single region. The center of the region is the state of Mississippi, but it takes in a large part of the Old Southwest. Mr. Hudson is native to this region. The tales, sketches, and anecdotes he records are the sort of thing he has heard all of his life, as nearly every Southerner of the region has heard them. His rôle is like that of a Walter Scott, gathering up a border minstrelsy, and one may hope that his work may have for Southern writers the quickening effect that Scott's ardent collecting had in other times.

Despite the finical objections of a recent reviewer (in *Time*) I feel sure that Mr. Hudson has been wise in using the term humor to cover a wide variety of material. His selections range from De Soto (whose "gentleman of Elva" reported that the Chickasaws loved hog-meat all too well) to the days of John Sharp Williams, who came along after *the* War. Mr. Hudson is not dogmatic about the classification given to his book. He really does not care what it is called, if it is understood that his purpose is "to piece together, from contemporaneous documents, the life of this region for this period, viewed as a *comédie humaine*".

The humor here recorded may often border on sheer rhetoric, it may be unconscious humor, it may skirt the edge of pathos or tragedy, or it may deal with humor in the Jonsonian sense and denote temperament. So much the better for the variety. We have to thank Mr. Hudson's editorial insight and his Southern instinct for adding to the now conventional "tall tales" and darkey stories a riotous and lusty procession of folk who set to flight all foolish simplifications: preachers, politicians, lawyers, duellists, pranksome ornithologists like Audubon, humorous-minded Confederate soldiers, ripsnorting editors, doctors who, while carrying catnip through the wilderness are pursued by frenzied wildcats, dentists who pull teeth on the "Mississippi Patent Plan", schoolmasters and rebellious scholars who long antedate the famous Hoosier performers.

The sources of Mr. Hudson's selections fall, he indicates, into seven main divisions: travel books, like Bartram's *Travels*, Chateaubriand's *Voyage*, Audubon's *Ornithological Biography*, and on to Martineau, Haliburton (the elder), and Olmsted; histories – "regional, state, local, professional, and ecclesiastical"; biographical writings, such as Gideon Lincecum's *Autobiography*, Madison Tensas' *Odd Leaves from the Life of a Louisiana Swamp Doctor*, Reuben Davis' *Recollections*, Devol's *Forty Years a Gambler on the Mississippi*, and so on; volumes of poems; almanacs – though the South had fewer almanacs than the East; and last, newspapers and magazines in great number.

But such printed sources, however important as bibliography, are still just bibliography. They follow, they do not precede the cultural sources from which the phenomenon of a humorous "tradition" derives its life. To know the meaning of such sources and to evaluate and understand the tradition itself, one must know and understand the region and its habits. This is the point at which literary criticism in our day so often breaks down; it is the point where Mr. Hudson really begins, the point where he is strongest, in the task to which he was born.

In his able introduction he holds that nothing is gained by seeking out literary origins. What matters is that Longstreet, Baldwin, Hooper, and other all but nameless masters of the mode developed in the 1830's "something new under the sun". This something, which to my mind furnishes the most distinctive and memorable items in the book, belonged to all classes alike in the region where it grew up. It was – this is of first importance – an oral art before it was a literary art. As Mr. Hudson wisely points out, it is vain to theorize about Southern humor until one has sat "on creek banks, around hunters' fires, on crossroad store fronts, or on plantation-house verandahs, and listened to the 'natives' yarn". Longstreet, Baldwin, and their followers brought forth something new in writing because "they had the wit to realize that something old in talking might look new in writing". More than that, it is this same oral tradition, generally but not always humorous, which accounts for a good deal in the manner of Stark Young, William Faulkner, and Howell Vines, whom Mr. Hudson cites. He might well have gone on to name Mark Twain and O. Henry, and, among the newer writers, Andrew Lytle; and he might well have argued that the absence of this quality or manner accounts for a part of the foreignness that Southerners distinguish in, say, Erskine Caldwell.

So far as I know, Mr. Hudson is the first American scholar to make this important connection between the Southern habit of yarning and the cast of a good deal of Southern literature. If critics want to push the speculation further, they might make the prevalence of an oral tradition (stronger by far than the indigenous literary tradition) account for certain characteristic features of Southern literature: its lack, for instance, of subtle *literary* artistry (since so much depended, in the oral tradition, on manner of delivery), or, contrarily, the presence of exaggerated rhetoric, in very flowery or highly vituperative passages, effective enough before a sympathetic audience, but not so good as Flaubert on a printed page.

In passing, Mr. Hudson fittingly pays his respects to Mr. Mencken's extraordinary reference, some years ago, to "the humorless South". This collection, surely, is a complete refutation of the libel, but a distinction can be made which leaves Mr. Mencken's remark in even worse case. The humor of the *old* South, which Mr. Hudson here exhibits, had in it a principle which I have seen much commended among moderns. Like the metaphysical poets, these folks safeguarded their romantic and Homeric impulses by subjecting them freely to a ridicule which, without ever turning them sour and skeptical, was fairly adequate in establishing balance. They were religious, indeed fundamentalist; but what center of "liberal" religion ever produced burlesque sermons as delightful as "Brother Crafford's Farewell Sermon" (which I have heard on occasion from religious lips) or the famous "Harp of a Thousand Strings", popular throughout the Southwest? What better antidote to a too-pompous medical science than Henry Clay Lewis's boisterous "Cupping on the Sternum"? What better way of confounding a too-dashing military spirit than the shrewd banter of Private John Allen, who declared he had taken part "in many a glorious retreat".

On the other hand, the *new* South, so far as it is a new South of which Mr. Mencken would approve, has lost this faculty of humorous self-criticism. The urban, progressive South is really "humorless", except as it has copied the gag and wisecrack of the metropolis. Few Southern editors would dare openly to banter the Chamber of Commerce or the power magnates in the way that Private John Allen bantered the old Confederate brigadiers. Yet I think that beneath the modern mask the old humorous tradition is alive. It has simply gone underground and passed back into the oral tradition. The day when it breaks forth into print again will be a day to live for.

DONALD DAVIDSON

"It is the Virile Part to React"*

"REACTION is the most radical of programs," says Mr. Tate; "it aims at cutting away the overgrowth and getting back to the roots. A forward-looking radicalism is a contradiction; it aims at rearranging the foliage." We are reaping as we have sowed, and Mr. Tate is not one of those who think that the cure is to distribute the crop more widely; he believes that it nourishes neither right thinking nor the best art, and we must plant afresh with a different harvest in view.

It would be wrong to infer from this that Mr. Tate's chief purpose is to offer a program of political action. All but three of the essays in his book deal directly with poetry; and "the greater poets," he says, "give us knowledge, not of the new programs, but of ourselves". Except by implication, he does not tell us what we are fundamentally; such a task he would doubtless reserve for the philosopher and the theologian. The literary critic's duty he defines in this way:

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* REACTIONARY ESSAYS ON POETRY AND IDEAS *by Allen Tate* (SCRIBNER'S. 240 pp. $2.50).

> It is, I think, our task to find out what the poets have done, not what they ought to have done, and to guess what it was possible for them to do in their times. But even the right guess would be a truism: what a poet wrote was alone possible for him to write. It is nevertheless a duty of the modern critic to notice the implication of the impossible, if only to warn the reader of modern verse, who is exasperated, that poets cannot write now like poets in 1579.

This is a statement with which one would quarrel only because of the misuses of criticism it might be taken to justify; if undue emphasis is given to the fact that a poet writes only what it is possible for him to write – that is, what it is possible for a given man in a given age to write – the result is generally criticism that confines itself to "elucidation". This is the type of criticism that Robert Shafer has said holds "every contribution to literature must be accepted just as it is. Every poem, every piece composed by a writer, is a sacred organic structure, a pure gift to man from the system of things, and is consequently above and beyond judgements."

The judgements Mr. Tate makes of particular poets in the present volume deny the practice of any such criticism, but this is not immediately evident. His approach is almost always to consider a poem as an "experience" completely contained within itself: the worth of a poem is in its self-sustaining perfection. Commenting on the tragedy of Racine of which the

French mathematician asked "*Qu'est ce que cela prouve?*" he says: "It proves nothing; it creates the totality of experience in its quality; and it has no useful relation to the ordinary forms of action." Taken without qualification, this means that poetry is not susceptible of moral judgement; yet, in another essay, Mr. Tate declares that "poetry perhaps more than any other art tests with experience the illusions that our human predicament tempts us in our weakness to believe". Now the specifically human way of looking on experience is to look on it morally; if poetry is a form of experience (which it plainly is), to value it merely for the completeness and adequacy with which it embodies *any* experience is to treat it scientifically, to ask of it merely "the facts". Science, in the sense in which Mr. Tate uses the word, is a means of enforcing our will upon the external world, but it is also a pursuit of knowledge as an end in itself, without regard to its moral consequences. A sound morality has nothing to fear from a sound science, for a sound science limits itself to the physically mensurable. But a poem offers only incidental aspects for physical measurement, and it is pushing the process of measurement too far and limiting criticism unjustly to insist that the final judgement of poetry be upon the question of the truth or falsity of the representation of the experience it contains, not upon the truth of falsity of that experience itself. Can "the totality of experience in its quality" be decided apart from its moral significance? Here Mr. Tate seems to be subscribing to the romantic heresy of experience for its own sake.

In "Three Types of Poetry" Mr. Tate attacks the manifestation in verse of "the spirit of the practical will: in poetry until the seventeenth century it leaned upon morality and allegory; now, under the influence of science, it has appealed to abstract ideas". Of the three kinds of poetry he is examining he believes two are definitely inferior; the third he leaves unnamed, but indicates that it is the best kind of poetry. These two lesser types of poetry are, in a measure, blind to experience; they do not accept experience for what it is, but seek to impose on it certain abstract patterns. They are the products of "the pure scientific spirit [called] here without much regard for accuracy, a positive Platonism, a cheerful confidence in the limitless power of man to impose practical abstractions upon his experience". The first type springs directly from this attitude and competes with practical science; the second type, romantic irony, arises when the abstractions have been found not so practical after all. Platonism of this sort is identifiable with allegory because it perverts experience; the figures of allegory are "amiable make-believe", called up by the will, which sees only what serves its purpose, not by the imagination, which sees the whole. There is another, better, sort of allegory, such as Dante's, in which the figure and the general meaning are insolubly wedded, so that the meaning of the particular incident is exactly homologous with the meaning of the general thesis; but this is too rare nowadays to engage Mr. Tate's attention for long.

When poetry of the Platonic type begins to predominate, Mr. Tate believes, the discrediting of all poetry is at hand:

> The physical imagination of poetry, granting it an unlimited range, is necessarily compacted of futile and in-

credible fictions, which we summarily reject as inferior instruments of the will. And rightly reject, if we assume two things – and our age is convinced that it is impossible to assume anything else: (1) that the only kind of imagination is that of the will, which best realizes its purposes in external constructions or in the control of the external relations of persons and things; (2) that this sole type of imagination will be disillusioned or optimistic, according as it is either perfectly informed, as in mere poetry, or adequately equipped by science with the "fourfold forms of reasons and consequent".

If poetry is asked to serve the same ends as science, it is inevitable that it should soon be found inferior to science. Then the poet may do one of two things: accept "disillusionment with life after the defeat of the will", or "repudiate poetry for a career of action". This is what has happened to numerous poets today; some are filled with despair, and many (after being filled with despair) have repudiated poetry for a political career by way of versifying Marxism. "The school preoccupied with what is called economic determinism," says Mr. Tate, "is in direct line of descent from the crudely moralistic allegory of the Renaissance."

This concern with poetry as a means of changing our environment Mr. Tate imputes to the humanists of the school of Babbitt and More as well as to the communists. The humanists have firmly opposed the aesthetic critics who hold that the poem is an object complete in itself, the only criterion for judging which is the end the poem sets out to achieve. The humanists have maintained that the achieved end is in turn subject to judgement on the basis of values drawn from the whole experience of man. Mr. Tate will not allow this; he says: "When a Humanist remarks that Shakespeare ["Genuine poetry . . . was written most completely by Shakespeare."] merely presented life without interpreting it; when a communist says that Shakespeare was a 'capitalist' poet because, in his plays, the lower classes are shown as buffoons, we must remember in each case that we are being told precisely the same thing: that poetry is a document to be used by the social will." In an essay that makes many brilliant distinctions Mr. Tate has failed to make an essential one. With all justice he opposes I. A. Richards and his followers, who would have poetry fill the place of religion, and the communists, who would have poetry serve the purposes of a religion of hate; but in identifying the will that seeks these things with the will that seeks more than mere aesthetic pleasure from poetry he has, whatever his intentions, allied himself with those who insist upon art for art's sake. In great poetry the means of expression and the thing expressed can be divorced only theoretically; nevertheless, if the second lacks moral elevation, there is no great poetry, and those who have remarked that this elevation embraces the same virtues that make a moral man cannot justly be accused of forcing the demands of the social will on art. They have simply observed that literary art embodies the moral values of the society that produces it and that the greatest literary art has been produced by societies which stressed certain moral values.

Mr. Tate is acutely aware of the artist's need for a background of moral certainty, and his criticisms of Hart Crane, Ezra Pound, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Archibald MacLeish, and E. E. Cummings show how the work of each has failed to achieve more than an expression of personality because the age has offered "no epos, myth, or code, no supra-human truth, to tell him what the terminal points of human conduct are". It is therefore regrettable to find him including in this volume the attack he made upon the humanists (chiefly in the person of Mr. More) in 1930, for they have attempted to indicate "the terminal points of human conduct", though not by the means Mr. Tate mentions, and to provide a "large scheme of imaginative reference". The source of Mr. Tate's objection to the humanists seems to be his belief that they extend to all departments of thought the Platonizing tendency he finds they display in the criticism of poetry. In other words, they make an eclectic and abstract pattern of behavior (an abstraction, Mr. Tate would say, that is "the death of everything") to which they ask all experience and all past literature to conform. In a sense, the humanist is of course an eclectic – he is willing to take his good where he finds it – but Mr. Tate's objection that the humanist makes his choice on the same principle as the naturalist, whom the humanist condemns, is not valid. Though both seek man's happiness, each defines it in a very different way.

In the end, Mr. Tate, like Irving Babbitt, ranges himself "unhesitatingly on the side of the supernaturalists", though not with any traditional faith. "The assumptions of this essay are that Humanism is not enough, and that if the values for which the Humanist pleads are to be made rational, even intelligible, the background of an objective religion, a universal scheme of reference, is necessary." The nature of such a religion Mr. Tate considers in "Religion and the Old South", an essay which upholds views very similar to John Crowe Ransom's. In the latter's provocative *God Without Thunder* he points out that religion is suffering gradual debilitation from the introduction of scientific ideas, that is, ideas of a universal character, practical and purposive, whereas religion to be vital needs "a particular God, and some particular history about him". It is through their conceptions of history that Mr. Tate seeks to isolate the peculiar qualities of the religious and the non-religious, or scientific, mind. The first looks on history as a sequence of particular events (the most important event presumably being the Incarnation), while the second loses its sense of time and history and sees it as a "logical series", "without sensation, accident, or contingency". Here is a condition like that prevailing in poetry: history is not assumed to be a record of concrete events, but an allegory from which the present may deduce such meaning as it thinks necessary to its needs. There follow from this an emphasis on the practical and a failure to appreciate the elements in experience that do not serve the practical. Using the figure of a horse, Mr. Tate explains how differently the non-religious mind looks on the world from the religious mind:

> This modern mind sees only half of the horse — that half which may become a dynamo, or an automobile, or any other horsepowered machine. . . . The religious mind, on the other hand, has this respect; it wants the whole horse; and it will be satisfied with nothing else.
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> . . . A religion of the half-horse is pre-eminently a religion concerning how things work, and this is a modern religion. . . . Now the half of the animal that this re-

ligion leaves out won't work at all; it isn't workable; it is a vast body of concrete qualities constantly conflicting with the workable half. . . .

The religion of the Old South was the religion of the whole horse; the earth and the fullness thereof (including man) was enough, and there was no need constantly to transform that fullness into "profits"; but the rest of the country was in the hands of "convinced adherents of large-scale exploitation of nature, not to support a stable religious order, but to advance the interests of *trade as an end in itself*". The collapse of the South's way of life was not solely a result of the Civil War: the underlying cause was the dogmatic structure of its religion, which, in contradistinction to the emotional quality that went with it, was "Protestant, aggressive, and materialistic", so that Southerners could offer no resistance in the realm of ideas to the commercial and industrial forces that were undertaking the conquest of the nineteenth-century world. "Not having a rational system for the defense of their religious attitude and its base in a feudal society, they elaborated no rational system whatever, no full-grown philosophy; so that, when the post-bellum temptations of the devil, who, according to Milton and Aeschylus, is the exploiter of nature, confronted them, they had no defense."

As a reactionary and a spokesman for the Nashville Agrarians, who believe that the South must not only preserve her peculiar culture but must also re-establish a political economy which will foster that culture, Mr. Tate asks how the qualitative religious view can be set up in the face of the opposition presented by the quantitative commercial view. "The answer is: by violence." In the liberal and communist press (those eulogists of proletarian violence) this answer has already occasioned hints that Mr. Tate may yet be the apologist of an American Hitler. It is conceivable that far worse things than this might befall him (I do not say Mr. Tate expresses the least sympathy for fascism); he might, for instance, hold that the change he seeks could be accomplished and sustained through the regular machinery of parliamentary democracy. For the stable and unified society he looks toward, a society so organized that its end and beginning is a reverence for spiritual values, cannot be attained by using the machinery of a society whose end and beginning is a worship of the material wealth this machinery is designed to make possible. Since in America there are no generally accepted dogmatic schemata which will preserve the religious attitude in sufficient strength for it gradually to change the forms of our capitalist society, the only hope is in vigorous attack upon these forms and their alteration into forms congenial to the qualitative view of life.

There is not space here to recount Mr. Tate's estimation of various poets ranging from Wyat and Donne to Emily Dickinson and Mr. Cummings. It will have to suffice to say that his own abilities as a poet have given him an especial understanding of the difficulties involved in writing poetry in this age and any other, and that in each case he considers a writer in relation to those features of his time that affect his art most closely. Nor is there space to do more than mention "The Profession of Letters in the South" and its discerning treatment of the troubled question of the relation between politics and letters.

Mr. Tate writes a prose so compressed and so much given to suggestion rather than explicit statement that at times he conveys the impression of a crabbed and wilful obscurity. I have dwelt at some length on points of disagreement with his opinions because these, once understood, help to resolve the difficulties of his style. These difficulties have their source in a divergence between the rational direction of his arguments and the end his will posits for them. The divergence puts a heavy burden of inference on the reader, who must by an act of sympathy deduce conclusions from Mr. Tate's statements which their nature does not always make inevitable. But it must be remembered that though reason is the vehicle by which we arrive at truth, will is the motive power. In cases where there is not an ideal union of the two, the goal of the will is not necessarily invalidated; and indeed their disparity often helps to make a writer more understandable to his own time – especially if it is a time moved, like ours, by many conflicting impulses. A writer who displays a clash of sensibilities – assuming his will and reason to equate with different forms of feeling towards his time – and is also set against the direction of his age, will speak to it with more persuasion for not seeming to reject it *in toto* out of inability to understand its feelings. In this manner, Mr. Tate's view of poetry as a sufficient end in itself, though open to logical attack, does, being an almost unconscious assumption of many persons today, serve as a convenient approach to his view of religion as a sufficient end in itself, a much more defensible position; and thus obtains a hearing for an idea which otherwise might be contemptuously dismissed with some mention of the adjective in his title. *Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas* does not make easy reading, but as the work of a sensitive and brilliant mind it offers deeper attractions.

GEOFFREY STONE